PAINTED MANUSCRIPTS OF THE SARASVATI MAHAL LIBRARY

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by
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Preface.....

Thanjavur Maharaja Serfoji's
SARASVATI MAHAL LIBRARY
Thanjavur - 613 009.

T. Shanmuga Rajeswaran,I.A.S.,
Dist. Collector & Director i/c.
Thanjavur

Thanjavur has been the seat of art and culture for more than a thousand five hundred years. Situated on the fertile banks of the river Cauvery, Thanjavur has nourished the flowering of Tamil genius for art and architecture. Great poets, skilled builders and master craftsmen, savants and scholars and enlightened kings combined to create a very sophisticated and advanced civilisation whose influence was felt not only in the Indian peninsula but also in the adjoining archipelago and as far north as Orissa.

Temples of grand designs and majestic proportions, embellished with the works of skilled sculptors, are the visible manifestations of the spirit and culture, priorities and principles, cherished values and beliefs of the people who lived in those days.

The Brahadeeswarar Temple is the symbol of the patronage of art by the Chola dynasty.

In more recent times, Thanjavur came under the influence of the Vijayanagara and the Maratha kings. Their influences were smoothly assimilated into the existing Tamil cultural milieu.

Thanjavur has been fortunate in its rulers. From the Chola times, through the Vijayanagara period and right upto the Marathas, the kings were great builders and patrons of art and other finer aspects of human endeavour. Each successive ruler added to the existing treasure house of art and knowledge.

The Sarasvati Mahal Library is one such institution. It was started during the reign of Ragunatha Nayak when it was known as "Sarasvati Bhandar" which later became the Sarasvati Mahal Library during the time of Serfoji II, who combined in him the best that both the East and West had to offer. He was a great lover of art and an ardent collector of books, manuscripts, etc. He is largely responsible for the priceless collection of books, manuscripts and other artefacts available in the Library.

A book informing the reading public about the invaluable manuscripts and other materials available in the Sarasvati Mahal Library was a long felt need. I am happy that Dr. Nanditha Krishna, Editor of this book & Director of Sir. C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar Institute of Indological Research has taken up this challenging task and has made an earnest and competent attempt to describe and illustrate the manuscripts in this library.

I hope that this publication will kindle the interest of many young people to take up the study of our cultural heritage.

T. SHANMUGA RAJESWARAN, I.A.S.,
Collector & Director
T.M.S.S.M. Library
Thanjavur

Date: 20.7.93
Thanjavur

Introduction

The Thanjavur Maharaja Serfoji's Sarasvati Mahal Library is a veritable treasure house of manuscripts and books unequalled by any other library in India. The reason for this unique collection is that it was started long ago, before anyone else thought of such a collection. Serfoji II, the Maratha ruler of Thanjavur, was taught by Rev. Schwartz to appreciate the beauty of books and develop a love of learning. But his predecessors and ancestors were, themselves, great scholars and artists who had set the trend which was inherited by Serfoji.

The Maratha rule of Thanjavur saw a synthesis of some of the greatest religious and artistic trends in Indian history. From the north came the influence of the Mughals and the Islamic states who had developed a love of decoration, utilising nature and the sheer symmetry of shapes. From Western India came the hardy Marathas who had specialised in the art of constructing forts and who brought with them traces of western Indian culture, particularly the religion of saints like Tukaram, Namdev and Ramdas, who preached of their love for Lord Rama or Vishnu, and oneness with the Lord. Meanwhile, the Telugu influence which accompanied the Hindu renaissance of the Vijayanagara rulers and their Nayak successors had come to stay and to play a major part in the culture of the State. Finally, the base was there, of a rich and ancient Tamil culture inherited from the Pallavas, Pandyas, Cholas and Cheras.

Today's Tamil culture is a heady mixture, the result of these many streams. It is to this genre that the paintings of the manuscripts of the Sarasvati Mahal Library belong.

Historically, this was a period of political alignments and chicanery, with each state selling itself or another to the financial and military might of the English, a might cleverly obtained by trade and unjust levies on the Indians. At a period when most Indian rulers were either at war with each other, or engaged in hunting and other wasteful

pursuits, or frittering away their lives and fortunes on wine and women, Serfoji amassed a great collection of books and manuscripts, so intense was his thirst for knowledge. From A.D. 1798 to 1832 Thanjavur was the scientific, literary and cultural centre of the country. Physicians, scholars and artists were invited here, and were patronised and commissioned to reproduce their research and knowledge. Serfoji himself was a scholar and savant, a keen student of many branches of human knowledge. He knew English well, besides Sanskrit, Marathi, Tamil and Telugu. He was educated by Christian missionaries and combined his western education with the knowledge and wisdom of the east. His scholarship was a precious inheritance from his Maratha ancestors, who had integrated culturally and emotionally with Thanjavur, their new home, making it a focal point for saints and scholars, musicians and artists. Thus, as the great musicians and philosophers flocked here, so did the great artists, particularly painters, creating a unique Thanjavur school of painting, among the rare classical schools of painting of post-Mughal British India.

The paintings were done by artists who were either descended from those painters who had fled the city of Vijayanagara, after the battle of Talikota, or their disciples and students. But these artists converted the earlier styles of wall and ceiling paintings into exquisite miniatures which they learned from their northern and western Indian counterparts, adding a wealth of detail and decoration, gold embellishment and an ability to miniaturise. However, they retained the strong earthy colours and the wide-eyed, folksy traditions of the earlier schools and brought about a new revolutionised style, the South Indian school of miniature painting.

A special mention must be made of the Rajus, a family of painters who fled the destruction of Vijayanagara in 1565. They split into two and went in two different directions. One branch settled in Mysore and evolved the Mysore school of painting, with its wide-faced, flattened gold leaf style. The other went on to Thanjavur and developed the Thanjavur school of painting, with its cherub-faced, gold relief style. The relationship of the two and their derivation from the Vijayanagara style are distinct and obvious. The Rajus continued their tradition even through a century of neglect, and have been vital to the revival of these two styles of painting in the second half of the twentieth century.

A little-known fact is the role played by the Thanjavur school of painting in the development of contemporary iconography. The paintings were hung on the walls of the household *pooja* and are responsible for many of our contemporary perceptions of the deities of Hinduism. Thus the child Krishna – on the ficus leaf or as the crawling infant – has become more popular than the serene Venugopala, generally found in the bronzes of the earlier periods. Similarly, other iconographic forms which gained popularity in this period are Uma Maheshwara and Nataraja (rather than the preferred Linga form of Lord Shiva), Pattabhi Rama (the coronation of Lord Rama) and the seated form of Lord Ganesha, as objects of veneration. Iconographic details, such as the deity's entourage and worshippers, his favourite attributes, such as the fire and drum of Shiva, and his mode of clothing, be it the jewelled girdle around Krishna's waist, the royal vestements of Rama or the excess of stone-encrusted gold jewellery still worn as head-decorations by South Indian brides and Bharata Natyam dancers, the large pendants hung on heavy chains and the v-shaped armlets, are as frequent in the Thanjavur paintings as they are in contemporary calender pictures. Popular preference for these forms has continued till today, as evidenced by their repetition in cinematic art, poster art and in the prints sold for the household *pooja*. The popularity of this style is reinforced by the fact that it appeared on choultry walls and portraits and in manuscripts. Other indicators of twentieth century fashions in this period are as varied as the costumes of dancers or the love portraiture, which had been avoided earlier.

The manuscripts have a wealth of information about the period: the cultural preferences of the times, the life and teachings of savants and scholars, ancient works of philosophy and religious scholarship, and the administrative system of the Marathas and its gradual take-over by the British are all recorded therein. There is a wealth of material awaiting an army of scholars to translate, which, due to the great variety of subjects and the many languages encouraged by the rulers, makes it a difficult task to be taken up, requiring a variety of skills and scholarship.

The very nature of the manuscripts has prevented them from being handled by the public in general, as they are made of either palm leaf or paper and can be easily damaged or destroyed. Thus, these painted manuscripts have remained away from public purview and are known only to the occasional scholar or visitor. But they are a part of a rich heritage and it is important that the rest of India and the world know more about their existence. The rich diversity of paintings indicates the variety and depth of Maharaja Serfoji's interest, from Vedanta and Advaita to puranic legends, from mythical origins of animals to details of their care and maintenance, and finally the anatomically perfect medical treatises with their illustrations, the exquisite herbarium paintings which heralded Audobon, and the many records of the people and life styles of the 19th century which have been painstakingly catalogued. These paintings are an excellent history of their times and an indication of the origins of what has come to be the contemporary culture of Tamil Nadu.

The rich melange of cultures in Thanjavur encouraged the use of several languages in the manuscripts. I was fortunate to know three of them - Sanskrit, Marathi and Tamil - of which the first two were essential for a study of the Maratha manuscripts. While this book refers to several manuscripts, and gives a short summary of many, there is no attempt to discuss their contents, as they are varied and need not pertain directly to the painting. However, the history and religious and cultural traditions of the Maratha period are treasured in several of these manuscripts.

Mr. V.K. Rajamani and I would like to thank Mr. M.S. Sadasivam, former Director of the Thanjavur Maharaja Serfoji's Sarasvati Mahal Library, Mr. P. Perumal, Conservator, and Mr. A. Panchanathan, A.O. i/c for their help in bringing out this book, Mr. T. Shanmuga Rajeswaran, I.A.S., Collector of Thanjavur District, for the Preface, and to so many of the staff members for their co-operation and total absorption in this work and for their keenness to share their knowledge of the treasures of the Sarasvati Mahal Library with the outside world.

Mr. Rajamani spent several months tirelessly photographing each painting in minute detail, and it has always been a pleasure to work with him. My study of the contents of the manuscripts would not have been possible without the assistance of Mr. T.R. Bhima Rao, Marathi Pandit, and Mr. N. Srinivasan, Sanskrit Pandit, who correlated several of the paintings with the texts of the manuscripts, and helped with the interpretation. To Mrs. S. Sumathra, Librarian of the C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation, I owe my thanks for the constant assistance given by her at every stage of the research and writing, and to my mother, Mrs. Shakunthala Jagannathan, and my sons, Prashanth and Rudra, for proof reading the text with me. To the many persons who typed, edited and helped in so many other ways, my sincere thanks.

Madras *Dr. Nanditha Krishna*

Maratha Rulers of Thanjavur

Thanjavur was named after Thanjan, a *rakshasa* (demon) who once lived there, and who was killed by Lord Vishnu, Nilaperumal, and Anandavalli Amman. The dying demon requested that his city may be named after him, a boon which was granted, and Thanjavur or the "city of refuge" (Thanjan = refuge) came into being. Another ancient name for the city was Alagai. The English referred to it as Tanjore.

After the Chola dynasty founded by Vijayalaya in A.D. 850 came to an end with the death of Rajendra III in 1279, the state of Thanjavur was ruled by a succession of petty chieftains who claimed descent from the Cholas till, towards the end of the 14th century, the land was annexed by the Vijayanagara kingdom. Viceroys were appointed to manage and administer the state, as in other Vijayanagara states. In 1532 Achyuta Raya of Vijayanagara appointed Sevappa Nayak, his personal attendant, as the Viceroy of Thanjavur. Sevappa, in turn, established the Nayak dynasty at Thanjavur.

Sevappa's rule was peaceful and uneventful, to be followed in 1560 by that of his son Achyutappa, a deeply religious ruler. It was during Achyuta's reign that the Vijayanagara empire was routed at the battle of Talikota, but the Thanjavur Nayaks never swerved from their loyalty.

The reign of the first three Nayak kings of Thanjavur - Sevappa, Achyuta and, later, Raghunatha - was marked by the ministership of Govinda Dikshita, famed as an able administrator and erudite scholar. Noted for his knowledge of the *Shastras*, he encouraged his patrons' munificence towards temples and scholars.

The greatest of the Nayak rulers was, undoubtedly, Raghunatha, son of Achyuta, who was crowned in the year A.D. 1600. An able warrior, he defeated the Nayaks of Madurai and Gingee at Toppur. The ruler of Jaffna, who had

sought refuge at the court of Achyuta, was restored his kingdom when Raghunatha drove the Portugese out of Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka. He defended Penukonda for the Vijayanagara king.

Raghunatha Nayak also encouraged trade and permitted a Danish settlement, which came up in 1620 at Danesborg at Tarangambadi, to be fortified in 1622. This inspired the English to seek trade with Thanjavur, which was to lead to far-reaching repurcussions.

The literary traditions established by Sevappa, under the tutelage of Govinda Dikshita, came to fruition under the rule of Raghunatha. A gifted scholar in both Sanskrit and Telugu, and a talented musician, Raghunatha's court was distinguished for its scholars and the *pandita parishads,* or assemblies of scholars. Telugu and Sanskrit literature received a great fillip. But, more important, the foundations of what was to become the culture of our times was laid during the reign of Raghunatha Nayak. Telugu culture was imported and adapted to Tamil traditions. Thus *Yakshagana* gave birth to the *Bhagavata Mela,* the *Tholu Bommulu* to the *Tholu Bommalatam* and even the marionette tradition or *Bommalatam* is believed to have Telugu origins, as the name suggests.

The scholars at Raghunatha's court were prolific writers and their manuscripts were collected and preserved, to become a part of the later Sarasvati Mahal Library.

On Raghunatha's death in A.D. 1634, Vijayaraghava ascended the throne. He was repeatedly attacked by the Nayaks of Madurai and the Sultan of Bijapur. A terrible famine in the year A.D. 1659 sent the Muslim hordes running, hotly pursued by an army of Kallars from Vallam.

But Vijayaraghava's fate was sealed by his traditional enmity with Chokkanatha Nayak of Madurai. Vijayaraghava refused to give a Thanjavur princess in marriage to Chokkanatha, for which insult the latter sent his general, Venkata Krishnappa Nayak. According to legend, Vijayaraghava was absorbed in *pooja* when the enemy reached him, after capturing Vallam and besieging Thanjavur. His troops deserted him for, according to Manucci, Vijayaraghava had ravished the wives and daughters of his officers and had collected an impressive 700 wives and 15,300 concubines.

Vijayaraghava released his gifted son Mannaru from captivity and, together, they rushed to meet their death. Before leaving, Vijayaraghava had the *zenana* blown up, to deprive Chokka of a Thanjavur princess.

Of the five Bahmani kingdoms who combined against Vijayanagara, Bijapur and Golkonda tried to foray southwards. In 1638, Shahji Bhonsle, a commander of the Bijapur Sultanate, took parts of Mysore, Vellore and Gingee for his ruler. Shahji was the father of Chhatrapati Shivaji, founder of the Maratha kingdom on the west coast of India and son of Jijabai, and Venkoji (or Ekoji), founder of the Maratha dynasty in Thanjavur, son of Tukabai. The two were half-brothers, born of two separate mothers.

The short-sighted Thirumala Nayak of Madurai had invited the Sultans of Golkonda and Bijapur to help him against Gingee and Thanjavur respectively. Golkonda had his own ideas for Gingee, while both Thanjavur and Madurai ended up paying tribute to the Sultan of Bijapur. The officer of the Sultan, Shahji Bhonsle, levied the tribute, and also took Gingee for his ruler.

With the death of the Thanjavur Nayaks, the Nayak of Madurai appointed his foster brother Alagiri as Governor of Thanjavur and returned to Madurai. He had hardly returned when Alagiri declared his independence.

Unknown to anyone, Chengamaladas, the son of Vijayaraghava Nayak, had been sent away by the queen

before the blowing up of the *zenana*. Rayasam Venkanna, the Telugu secretary of the dead Nayak king, solicited the aid of Adil Shah, Sultan of Bijapur, for Chengamaladas. Adil Shah ordered his Bangalore *jaghirdar*, Venkoji (or Ekoji), son of Shahji Bhonsle, to help the young prince. Venkanna was an arch conspirator who negotiated with various possible rulers till he finally threw in his lot with Ekoji (plate 2).

Ekoji's triumphant take-over of Thanjavur is a little controversial. According to a Sanskrit manuscript, *Bosalavamsavalli*, written by Venkatakavi, son of Raghavaraya, Ekoji captured Arni, released Thanjavur and halted at Thiruvadi where God appeared in a dream and told him to stay. However, according to British sources, Ekoji stayed because he was not paid his expenses. Chengamaladas was crowned ruler, but court intrigues made his throne insecure. The death of the Sultan of Bijapur in 1673 gave Ekoji an opportunity to throw off the yoke placed by his rulers and enter Thanjavur triumphantly. There is a controversy about the date of his coronation, which ranges from 1674 to 1676.

The Nayaks had left a rich legacy in Thanjavur, as they had elsewhere in Tamil Nadu. Although they were Telugu-speaking aliens, they patronised literature, religion and the arts, particularly Sanskrit and Telugu literature. Govinda Dikshita, minister of Achyuta and Raghunatha Nayak, was a great scholar and a friend of the famous Appayya Dikshita. Govinda Dikshita's son Yajnanarayana describes Raghunatha's rule in his *Sahitya Ratnakara*. Raghunatha Nayak was a scholar of Sanskrit and Telugu literature, a musician who authored several books. Maduravani and Ramabhadramba were two famous poetesses in his court, while Sudhindra and Raghavendra were two famous Madhva gurus patronised by him.

It was during Raghunatha's reign that a palace library was started, a *Sarasvati Bhandar*, which was to be developed later by Raja Serfoji II into the Sarasvati Mahal Library.

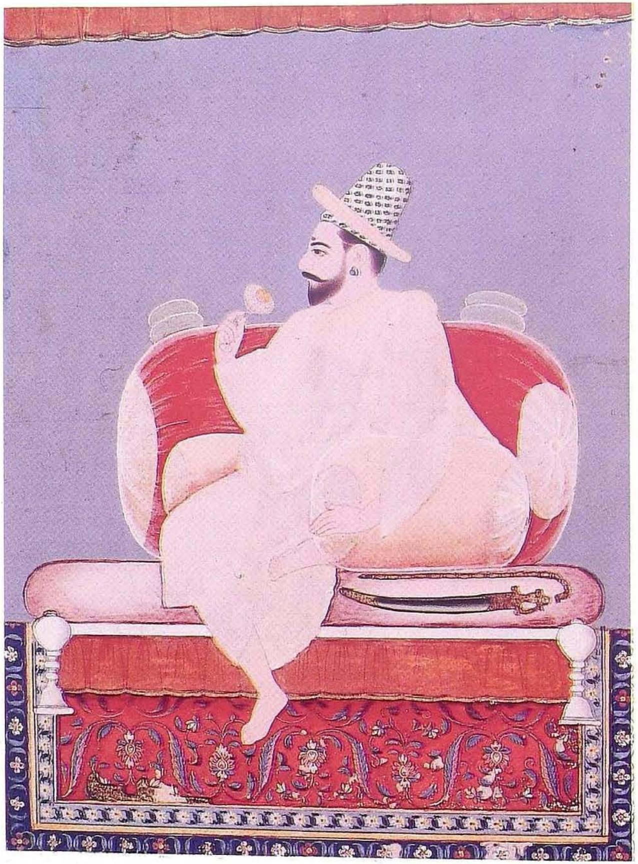


Plate 2: Ekoji, the founder of the Maratha rule of Thanjavur

Ekoji or Venkoji (A.D. 1676 to 1684) (plate 2)

Ekoji can be described as the founder of the Maratha rule of Thanjavur. He was a great warrior who spent much of his life fighting the kingdoms of Mysore and Madurai, besides the expansionist ambitions of his own half-brother Shivaji. Yet, he attempted to win over the people of Thanjavur and to integrate with his new home.

In 1676-77, Ekoji's half-brother Shivaji descended on the Carnatic, entered into a treaty with Golkonda and captured Gingee. He advanced towards Thanjavur to meet his brother, but had to rush back to meet a possible Mughal attack. On his return, he appointed Santoji, an illegitimate son of his father Shahji Bhonsle, as governor of the land between Gingee and the Coleroon. Santoji was invaded by Ekoji, who received two historic letters from his empire-building brother Shivaji exhorting him to perform great deeds. Ekoji had no alternative except to pay a large sum of money and promise an annual tribute, which was stopped on Shivaji's death. Ekoji was not interested in war or in extending the borders of his kingdom, and did not participate in the building of a Maratha empire. He even negotiated the sale of Bangalore, his *jaghir,* as he was now comfortably settled in Thanjavur.

Ekoji I was a great patron of scholars, besides constructing canals and tanks, reclaiming fallow lands and repairing villages destroyed by floods. He patronised Sanskrit and Telugu learning and wrote several books in Telugu.

Ekoji I was a great scholar himself, besides being a patron, and the South Indian school of Marathi literature began during his time. Ekoji wrote several books in Telugu, including the *Dvipada Ramayana.* His wife, Deepabai Ingle, wrote short verses and was the author of several devotional and philosophical poems. Ekoji's minister, Narasimha Rao, wrote several books in Sanskrit and Marathi, while the well-known Marathi poet, Raghunatha Pandita, wrote his *Damayanti Swayamvara* and *Pativrata Dharma* at this time.

Ekoji died in 1684, although another tradition has him abdicating in favour of his son in that year. A contemporary Telugu work by Shivarama Kavi entitled *Karnakalanidhi* describes his heroic defence of Trichi Fort from the Mysore army.

Shahji (A.D. 1684 to 1711)

According to a Maratha inscription, Ekoji's three sons ruled jointly: Shahji at Thanjavur, Sarabhoji (Serfoji I) at Sakkottai near Kumbakonam and Tukkoji at Mahadevipatnam in Mannargudi. Shahji helped his cousin Rajaram and his wife Tara Bai against Aurangazeb till the fall of Gingee in A.D. 1698, after which Thanjavur had to pay an annual tribute of rupees four lakhs to the Mughals. According to the *Sahendra Vilasa Kavya* of Ayyarval of Thiruvisainallur, Venkoji installed Shahji as ruler during his own lifetime and made Tryambakaraya Makhi his prime minister.

In 1700 Shahji went to war against Rani Mangammal of Trichi and was defeated. However, Thanjavur and Trichi soon made common cause against Mysore which had built an anicut over the Kaveri. But the dam was washed away and the war averted.

Shahji's reign was rich in architecture and literature. The Durbar Hall and hospitals were built by him. He improved the fort at Thanjavur, constructed several *choultries* and hospitals staffed with Arab *hakims.*

His greatest contribution was to literature. His own works included the *Chandrashekhara Vilasa, Shabdaratna Samanvaya, Shabdaratna Sangraha* and the *Shringara Manjari.* Telugu and Marathi literature received a great fillip, while Sanskrit reached its literary peak.

Tryambakaraya Makhi wrote a new interpretation of the *Ramayana*, while the other Makhis-Narasimha, Bhagavantaraya, Anandaraya and Ramabhadra - were also authors. Venkata Krishna Dikshita wrote the *Natesha Vijayam, Shri Ramachandrodaya Kavya, Uttara Champu* and *Kushalava Vijaya Nataka.*

Shahji was a versatile writer in Telugu, Marathi and Sanskrit and is credited with being the progenitor of the *Padya Sahitya.* He wrote over 50 dramas, including *Lakshmi Kalyana, Markandeya Nataka, Tyagaraja Vilasa* and *Harihara Vilasa.* In 1693, Shahji donated the village of Thiruvisainallur (renamed Shahjirajapuram) near Kumbakonam and on the banks of the Kaveri, to a galaxy of 46 Brahmins famed for their poetry, philosophy and dramatical works. The village became a seat of scholarship in literature, philosophy and medicine. Shahji's court included brilliant scholars and poets such as Ramabhadra Dikshita, Srinivasa Dikshita, Bhaskara Dikshita, Venkateshwara Kavi, Vaidyanatha Kavi, Mahadeva Kavi, Periyappa Kavi, Bhuminatha Kavi, Shridhara Venkatesha and Appa Shastri. Contemporary Marathi writers such as Rangaswami, Digambar and Tryambak Jyotirvad have left descriptions of the rule of Shahji, his mother Deepabai Ingle, and the greatness of Thanjavur during his reign. An ardent devotee of Lord Tyagaraja of Thiruvarur, Shahji composed hundreds of songs in honour of his Lord. Tryambakaraya Makhi and Gangadhara Vajapeyin were his court *vidhwans* while Bhaskararaya, the great exponent of the Shakti cult, was a close associate. Other luminaries of Shahji's court were Shridhara Venkatesha Ayyarvaal, Ramachandra Dikshita, Sadashiva Brahmendra, Krasananda Sarasvati, Paramashivendra Sarasvati, Giriraja Kavi (grandfather of the saint-composer Tyagaraja), Muthukavirayar, Vasudevakavi Panchanatham, Ramabharathi and Muthu Thandavar.

Dramas in colloquial Tamil *(koothu)* were crude and vulgar at this time, though very popular. The best known drama of this period is the *Shringara Manjari Shahajiyam* by Periyappa Kavi, a love story woven around a lovesick Shahji and a beautiful heroine. The early dance dramas in Tamil were written in this period and include *Shahajiraja Kuravanji* and *Mohini Vilasa Kuravanji* composed by Saptarishi. The latter has been written both in Tamil and Sanskrit, with separate stanzas for each. Shahji's compositions in Hindi, Marathi and Sanskrit include the *Shankara-Kali Natana Samvadham* and *Chandrashekhara Vilasam Kuravanji,* the former depicting the dance contest between Shiva and Parvathi in Chidambaram including *jathi, ragamalikai, talamalikai,* etc., and is a tribute to the king's brilliance as a composer.

Shahji wrote the *Panchabhasha Kuravanji,* promoting linguistic integration. The story describes the love and devotion of four girls towards Lord Krishna, who appears at the *rajasuya yagam* of Yudhishthira. The girls praise him in four different languages - Telugu, Tamil, Marathi and Kannada. Krishna replies in Sanskrit and marries all four of them.

Other compositions of Shahji include *Radha Vijayam* in Hindi and *Mrityunjaya Chiranjeevi Natakam* in Marathi. His compositions may be recognised by the *mudra* Tyagesha: being a devotee of Lord Tyagaraja of Thiruvarur, he composed songs to his Lord and presented gifts to the temple. On the ceiling of the *Devasreya Mandapam* in the Thiruvarur temple is the story of Muchukunda, the king who helped Indra and entered paradise in glory.

Shahji was a great *Advaitin* who preached and spread the *paddhathi* of the *bhajana sampradaya.* His devotion to literature and spiritual pursuits prompted him to end his days as a saint in the fort at Vallam outside Thanjavur, after making his brother Serfoji I the ruler.

The descendants of Shahji Bhonsle were followers of Sant Ramdas, and his grandson, Shahji, was no exception. According to the *Advaita Kirtana,* a Tamil

manuscript, he became a *yogi* at the end of his life. His sister was already a *yogini*. The Maratha rulers were devoted to the *Advaita* philosophy propounded by Adi Shankara and did much to propagate it. Parabrahmananda Yogi, Poornabrahmananda Yogi (alias Appa Shastri), Krishnananda Sarasvati, Ramananda and Bhaskara Dikshita were among the important *Advaita acharyas.*

Tamil literature was neglected, although the reign of Shahji yielded gems such as those of Thayumanavar, Arunachalakaviraya, Vaidyanatha Desikar, Swaminatha Desikar, Thambiran of Thiruvaduthurai and Sivagnana Swamigal.

Sarabhoji (Serfoji) I (A.D. 1711 to 1729)

Shahji died childless and was succeeded by his brother Sarabhoji (Serfoji) I who ruled from A.D. 1711 to 1729. He too was deeply religious and charitable and endowed *agraharas* such as Mangamatam in Thiruvenkadu and Sarabhojirajapuram in Thirukkadaiyur. He was also a patron of letters. *Sarabharaja Vilasa* and *Ratimanmatha* were written by Jagannatha, while *Shivabharata* is an important chronicle of Shivaji and his achievements. Vedakavi (alias Anandaraya) wrote the *Vidyaparinaya* which was enacted at the temple of Anandavalli at Thanjavur.

Serfoji I took a wife from Satara, but was heirless. According to a Marathi inscription, his second queen pretended pregnancy and delivered a male child after ten months. However, the baby was, in fact, born to a washer-woman of Thanjavur. One version says it was killed by the king, while another version says that the child, called Savai Shahji, escaped, later to return as Kattu Raja. When Serfoji I died in 1728, one of his queens performed *sati.*

Serfoji inherited the wealth and talent introduced into Thanjavur by his brother. During his period, Rama Pandita wrote more than 25 works such as the *Tyagarajamanmiya, Kalalaya Manmiya, Vinaya Manmiya, Ramamritha Taranga, Mukundan Katha, Harivamsha, Atmavidya Vilasa Teeka, Divodasa Charita,* etc. Other notable works are Shyamaraja's *Rajagopala Vilasa* and Renukadasa's *Seeriyala Charita.*

Tukkoji (A.D. 1729 to 1735)

Serfoji's brother Tukkoji ruled for eight years, a period marked by his patronage of Hindustani classical music. Tukkoji wrote the *Sangeeta Saramrita,* while his minister Ghanashyama Pandita wrote a commentary on Bhavabhuti's *Uttararamacharita,* among several others. He had two wives, Kamala and Sundari, who were the joint authors of the *Viddhasalabhanjika Vakhya.*

Tukkoji helped Rani Meenakshi of Tiruchi in her war against Chanda Sahib, but could not keep the Muslims out of Madurai. Unfortunately, an unpopular Chetty minister resulted in a discontented end to his rule. He left behind a legitimate son, Ekoji, and another son, Pratapasimha, born to a sword wife.

The famous temple to Shri Mariamma was built in Tukkoji's period by Guru Sadashiva Brahmendra. Tukkoji was also a scholar in Sanskrit, Marathi, Tamil and Persian. He was the author of *Dhanvantri Vilasa* and the prominent literary figures in his court were Sangeeta Saramrutha Sadashiva and Ghanashyama.

A.D. 1735 to 1739

This was a disturbed period, when two rulers changed in four years. Ekoji II ruled for a little over a year (1735-1737), a period when Thanjavur was plundered by Chanda Sahib. The *khilledar* of the fort was one Syed who became a powerful conspirator. Ekoji was succeeded on his death by his wife Sujan Bai.

Ekoji II also contributed several works on the *puranas* and dramas. His writings include *Tyageshaparinaya* and *Shakuntala*. It was during Ekoji's rule that the poet Gangadhara wrote the *Narasimhapurana, Hari Bhakti, Sriranga Mahatmya, Suta Samhita, Mallari Manmiya, Kama Tantra Sara*, etc.

In 1738 an imposter called Kattu Raja, claiming to be Savai Shahji, the son of Serfoji I, overthrew Sujan Bai and had her killed in a very cruel way. He was supported for a while by Chanda Sahib, but when the facts of his birth came out, the latter had no compunction in replacing him with Pratapasimha.

Pratapasimha (A.D. 1739 to 1763) (plate 3)

Pratapasimha was, initially, a reluctant ruler. Among his first actions was to imprison and later kill the powerful *khilledar* Syed. He allied with the English and, in response to an appeal from Muhammed Ali of Tiruchi, attacked Chanda Sahib. Pratapasimha's general Manoji helped capture the fort of Arcot. Pratapasimha's period is one of continuous war, caught as he was between the French and the English and their lackeys, Muhammed Ali of Tiruchi and Chanda Sahib of Arcot. He bought off the English and defeated the French in 1761 in the siege of Pondicherry. The English, inspite of their professed show of friendliness, did not hesitate to support Muhammed Ali's claims against Thanjavur. Finally, the Raja paid twenty two lakhs in return for Colladdy and Yelangadu from the Nawab and the East India Company's guarantee for the fulfilment of the treaty. Thus the end of Thanjavur's independence had begun. Thanjavur was also constantly at war with Ramnad, winning lands lost by Tukkoji and losing them again, helped by Pudukkottai. Pratapasimha was stopped by the Nawab of Arcot, who was now his overlord.

Pratapasimha was a popular ruler, the last of the great kings of Thanjavur. He was served by able men such as Manoji, his general, who was pro-English and able to estimate the trends of his times, and the Dabir Pandita, an expert on revenue and administration. The latter, with his ruler, invited the Shankaracharya to Kumbakonam from Udaiyarpalaiyam, to which he had shifted from Kanchipuram because of the increasing Muslim influence and presence at Kanchi. Pratapasimha was also a very tolerant ruler and built the mosque at Nagore, endowing it with fifteen villages. To strengthen his position, he increased the *kudiyaram* to the ryots. On his death two of his queens committed *sati*. Pratapasimha was a prolific author in Marathi who wrote *Krishna Manjari, Uma Samhita* and *Parijata Nataka*.

Tuljaji (A.D. 1763 to 1787) (plate 3)

Pratapasimha was succeeded by his son Tuljaji in 1763. This was a disturbed period in Thanjavur's history, with the Nawab of Carnatic coveting Thanjavur and Hyder Ali attacking the Carnatic. In 1773, Thanjavur fell to the combined forces of the Nawab and the East India Company, till the Board of Directors in England questioned the Company's conduct and ordered the restoration of Thanjavur to the Raja in 1776. The three interim years were dark ages for the people of Thanjavur, when the Nawab exacted the last *pie* out of the helpless cultivators. Several people migrated out of Thanjavur in desperation.

Tuljaji was responsible for the political degeneration of Thanjavur. He was fond of liquor. He dismissed and imprisoned the Dabir Pandita, an act that alienated the Nawab's sympathies and lost Tuljaji an honest and sincere advisor. Finally, in his abject surrender, he had to pay a regular tribute to the Nawab and four lakhs to the Company for his own safety. He could not have a foreign policy of his own, while the Nawab was, himself, busy building up debts which were to sell him out totally to the Company. Tippu Sultan raided Thanjavur in 1784, abducting 12,000 children, looting cattle and destroying channels. Finally, the Kallars emptied the land of the little that was left, reducing it to total misery.

Plate 3: Tuljaji & Pratapasimha ▶

Tuljaji was a Sanskrit composer and a patron of Telugu and Marathi literature. Aluri Kuppanna was conferred the title of Andhra Kalidasa by Tuljaji. It was he who encouraged the missionary Schwartz, who was appointed the teacher of Sarabhoji (better known as Serfoji), a child he adopted from a collateral branch, who was to become Serfoji II. Schwartz left detailed accounts of the Thanjavur court of his times and was to be a major player in restoring his charge Serfoji to the throne of Thanjavur.

Amarasimha (A.D. 1787 to 1798) (plate 4)

On Tuljaji's death in 1787, his son Amarasimha, the son of a concubine, ascended the throne as regent to Serfoji, as per the dying wishes of Tuljaji. He was forced into a treaty with the English, to pay them the three lakhs due to the Nawab, as well as four lakhs of annual tribute. His reign was marked by official corruption and popular misery. The *kudiyaram* for the ryots was increased, but the land was divided between a few *puttackdars* to encourage cultivation and to enable revenue collection. This proved unsatisfactory, and the Company took the task of collection into its own hands, its corrupt *dubashes* earning two to four lakhs in ten to fifteen years.

Amarasimha intrigued to have the adoption of Serfoji nullified and his inheritance to the *gaddi* of Thanjavur set aside, causing the visit of the Madras Governor to Thanjavur. On consulting the *pandits,* who had been chosen and bribed by Amarasimha, the Governor declared the adoption of Serfoji illegal and Amarasimha as the rightful heir to the throne. But Amarasimha's hostility towards Serfoji prompted Schwartz, Serfoji and the widows of Tuljaji to appeal to Lord Cornwallis, the then Governor General. This time *pandits* were found who supported Serfoji's claims and Amarasimha was deposed. Amarasimha refused to accept a pension from the British.

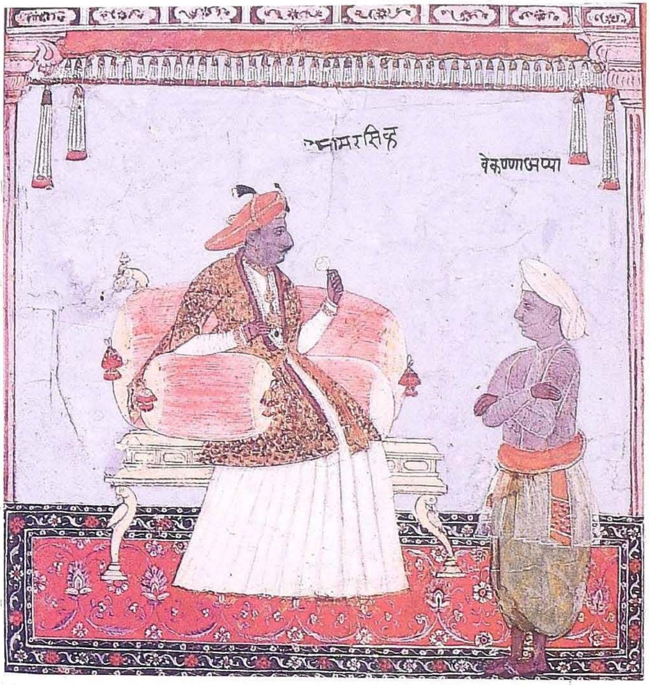


Plate 4: Amarasimha & Venkanappa

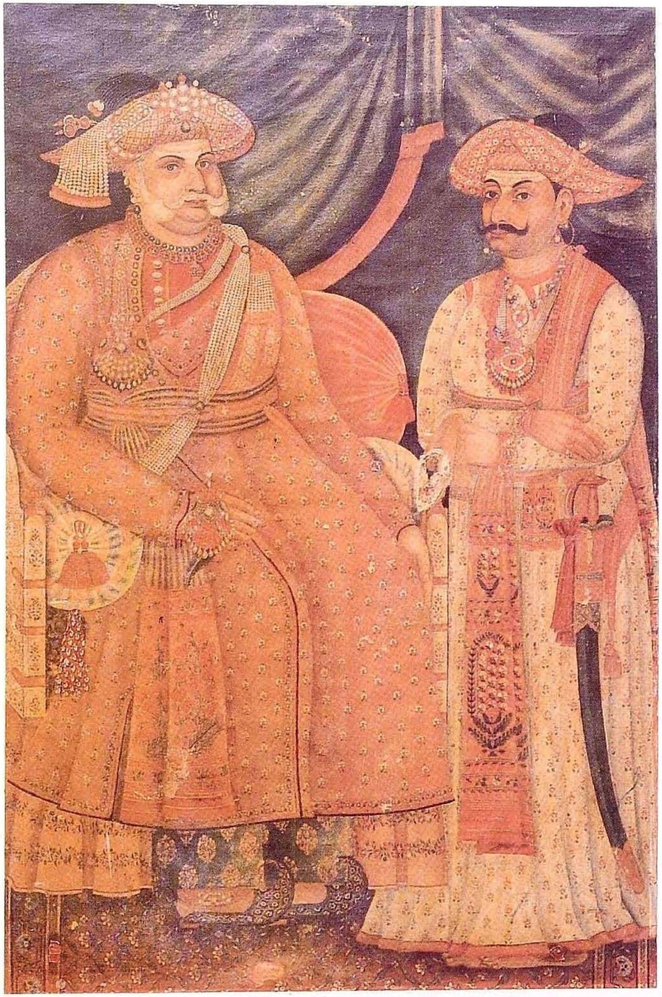


Plate 5: Serfoji II and Shivaji II

Serfoji II (A.D. 1798 to 1832) (plate 5)

Serfoji ascended the throne in 1798. In 1799, he had to give up the administration of Thanjavur to the British in return for an annual pension of one lakh *pagodas* and one-fifth of the net revenue. He was deprived of all power except in the fort of Thanjavur and its neighbourhood. The revenue and judicial systems were taken over by the Company, leaving Serfoji a mere titular ruler.

Serfoji devoted his life to the pursuit of culture, and Thanjavur became renowned for its learning. He erected a monument in marble in the chapel at Thanjavur for Schwartz, the missionary who introduced him to Western learning. Serfoji's love of learning and thirst for knowledge led him to establish the Sarasvati Mahal Library which was endowed with manuscripts collected from all over India, and books from all over the world. Medical treatises, in the Library's collection contain his notings alongside, in English. His library included treatises on *Vedanta,* grammar, music, dance and drama, architecture, astronomy, medicine, training of elephants and horses, etc.

Serfoji set up the first *Devanagari* printing press in South India, using stone letters. He had a small museum where he collected old coins. His scientific bent of mind is demonstrated by his collection of the air pump, the electric machine, the astronomical instruments and the ivory human skeleton. His *darbar* hall was decorated with oil paintings of the Maratha rulers of Thanjavur, besides other prints and paintings in the library. His architectural contribution is the eight-storeyed tower *manora* at Saluvanayakapattinam, a thanksgiving for the English victory over Napoleon.

Apart from his avid collection of books and manuscripts, Serfoji was a writer himself, and is credited with the authorship of the *Kumarasambhava Champu, Mudrarakshaschya, Smritasangraha* and *Smritasarasamuchya.*

Serfoji was more than a bibliophile. He established the Dhanavantari Mahal where physicians of Allopathy, Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha researched their systems of medicine and left eighteen volumes of the results of their studies. He had the important herbs studied and catalogued in the form of exquisite hand paintings. His pilgrimage to Benares was also recorded in the form of eight plates. Serfoji patronised music, dance and the fine arts. He constructed several *choultries* and initiated poor-feeding, besides funding several Vedic *yajnas,* as exemplified in an inscription at Orathanadu.

Shivaji II (A.D. 1833 to 1855) (plate 5)

Serfoji was succeeded in 1833-by his only surviving son Shivaji. Described as 'a pale and sickly lad', he had twenty wives, leaving two daughters and no son on his death in 1855. Lord Dalhousie's law on the lapse of inheritance came into full effect and the Maratha rule of Thanjavur whimpered to an end.

Administration

The Marathas were foreigners in an alien land, but settled into their new home very fast. The king was head of state, assisted by the *mantri* and *dalavai.* The latter often combined with the former post or that of *senapati, peshwa* or *dharmadikari.* The *pradhan* or *dabir pandita* was the revenue collector. Several posts came under these officials.

The land was divided into *nadus* or *subahs,* each of which was under a *subedar,* supported by the *amin,* who collected the revenue. The villages were self-administered, as from time immemorial, with their hereditary or elected officials. Justice was localised, although Pratapasimha appointed a civil judge to register decrees. Village disputes were settled by private arbitration. The Raja dispensed criminal justice as per Shastraic injunctions, tempered with mercy. But the village had its own policemen, the *kavalkarar,* who were its eyes and ears.

Religion

Between 1820 and 1822, Serfoji II went on a pilgrimage to Benares, accompanied by 3000 persons including his English doctor, Dr.Sutton. He visited Calcutta, Gaya, Prayag, Nagpur, Hyderabad, Cuddapah, Tirupati, Kalahasti, Kanchipuram, Chidambaram and Rameshwaram, besides Benares, where he stayed for three months. One of his court poets, Utke Govindachari, wrote a Marathi *lavani* called *Thirthasthali Yathrecha Lavanya* describing the sacred towns *(thirtha sthal)* and temples visited by Serfoji.

A document in Modi lists sixty four temples managed by the Marathas, some dating back to the Cholas, others consecrated by the Vaishnavite Alwars and several constructed by the Marathas. The private temple of the Maratha rulers was the Chandramouleeshwara Swami shrine within the palace. The Brihadeeshwara temple was renovated by Serfoji I, who installed 108 Shiva Lingas within, besides renovating the Ganesha shrine of the temple. He performed the Kumbhabhishekham in 1801.

The Marathas gave handsome gifts to several temples, the important ones being at Thiruvannamalai, Tirupati, Srirangam (Tiruchi), Madurai, Rameshwaram and Puri. Although they were Shaivites, they also worshipped Vishnu in keeping with the tenets of Adi Shankara, the *Guru* of *Advaita.*

The Maratha rulers supported several Vedic *yajnas* and *Veda pathashalas* (or schools where the Vedas were taught to young Brahmin boys). The Kashi *math* at Benares was managed by the Kashi *math* at Thirupanandal and maintained by the Marathas by a grant of eight villages in Thiruloki Maganam. Pilgrims from Thanjavur stayed at the Kashi *math* at Benares.

The Shankaracharya of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham was induced to shift to Thanjavur during the reign of Pratapasimha, as he wished to reside on the banks of the Kaveri. A *math* was built at Kumbakonam and maintained by the Marathas till Shivaji II's death.

A branch of the Vaishnava Ahobila *math* at Andhra Pradesh functioned at Narasimhapuram near Kumbakonam. This was maintained by the Marathas and the Jeeyar visited the Thanjavur Palace in 1829 and 1849.

Other *maths* patronised by the Marathas include the Veera Shaiva *math* at Kumbakonam, the Sircar *math* at Thiruvannamalai, the Meru Swamigal *math* at Mannargudi, Shivapooja *math* at East Alangam, Thanjavur, the Goswami, Uttaradi and Vyasaraya *maths*. Several *Thambirans* (Shaivite ascetics) and *Adheenams* were also supported by the Marathas.

The Marathas were tolerant rulers who gave endowments for Muslim shrines and festivals. Apart from the construction of the Nagore mosque, the Bade Hussain *Darga* at Thanjavur was managed by the Thanjavur Palace *devasthanam*. Rev. Fr. Schwartz constructed a church in the Sivaganga gardens within the fort. Serfoji commemorated his love and esteem for his teacher by installing a marble plaque within.

Music, Dance and Drama

Thanjavur was an ancient centre of fine arts and literature and the Marathas continued this tradition. Under the Marathas Thanjavur became an important centre of devotional music. Ekoji I continued the usage of Telugu as the court language and the language of the cultural and musical traditions. His successor Shahji was a scholar who composed several dramas, *padyas* and *kavyas*. Tuljaji I authored the *Sangeeta Saramrita*. All the rulers, and often even their spouses, were authors and musicologists.

It was during the period of Maratha rule that the *kirtan* and *Harikatha* were introduced to Thanjavur. The Maratha tradition of spiritual teaching included music, dance and histrionics. The Maratha rulers brought in the Marathi *kirtan* tradition and, when Samartha Ramdas established his *math* in 1663 A.D. at Thanjavur, he laid the foundation for the *kirtan*. One of his disciples was Bhimarajaswami, who was renowned for this form of music. In the latter half of the 17th century, many more *maths* were established by the Maratha saints, and the *kirtan* and *Harikatha* grew in importance. In the *kirtan* tradition, there were the *padas* and the *abhangas*, where importance was given to the singing and group participation, along with an explanation of the songs. The other type was the Naradiya School, with an erudite exposition. This became very popular and was to influence the pre-Maratha *kalakshepa*. The Maratha form of short verses or metrical compositions interspersed in the story, such as the *abhang, pada, ovi*, etc. were adopted into the *kalakshepa*. Once again, these were incorporated into Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada compositions to suit the text or *nirupana* of the *Harikatha*.

The *svarajati*, composed of alternating *jatis* (rhythmic syllables) and *svaras* (musical notes) appeared in this period. Melattur Virabhadrayya's *Huseni svarajati* is the earliest example of this form of composition.

During the reign of Serfoji II, a regular western band, consisting of violin, piano, clarionet, bass, drum, tambourine and harp, was established in the royal court.

Several eminent musicians, poets and scholars were endowed with gifts of land, including Veena Kalahasti Aiyar, Veena Kuppaiyar, Veena Ramaswami, Jagannatha Bhatgoswami and Palambhat Bhatgoswami. There was a separate Department of Music, and Thanjavur became the centre of Carnatic Music in this period. Eminent court poets included Seshachalapati, Giriraja Kavi, Muthuswami Kavirayar, Govindachari, Ramachandra Dikshitar, Nalla

Bhuta Kavi, Venkatesa Kavi, Tryambaka Bhat, Bhagavanta Kavi and Sivakolundu Desikar.

Most important, the Maratha period in Thanjavur saw the establishment and development of the three most famous composers of Carnatic music, Shyama Shastri, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Thyagaraja, often referred to as the "trinity", who lived in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although they hailed from other places - Shyama Shastri from Kanchipuram, Muthuswami Dikshitar from Virinchipuram and Thyagaraja from the Telugu land - their families had moved to the Thanjavur area because of the disturbed political conditions elsewhere in the south at that time. They settled in Thiruvarur on the banks of the river Kaveri, perhaps because it was the abode of the family deity, Shri Thyagarajaswami, of the Maratha rulers. Their contribution to Carnatic music is hailed every time a contemporary musician sings one of their compositions. They composed for musical concerts and created new forms for dance. But they were also divinely-inspired and spiritual, composing in the name of their Lord and refusing royal patronage. Such was their greatness.

The *Natya shastra* had an old tradition in the Thanjavur region, as evidenced in the sculptures of the various *karanas* found on the temples of Thanjavur, Kumbakonam, Chidambaram, Thiruvannamalai and Vriddhachalam. There are references to dance in *Sangam* literature, and the encouragement given by the Cholas is well-documented. But it was during the Vijayanagara period that dance, like the other arts, was enriched by other forms, such as the *Yakshagana.* Vijayaraghava Nayak was a patron of the arts and the first *kuravanji,* the *Thanjaivellaipillaiyar,* has been dated to his reign. Kshetrayya, the famous composer of *padas,* visited his court, and several desi *(non-classical) dance* items are listed in a manuscript of this period, the *Kshetrayya Padamudu.*

During the Maratha period the dance of the *devadasis,* the *dasi attam,* was known as *sadr nautch.* It was restricted to the temple and royal court. But the dancers commanded great respectability, were conferred titles and even partook of rituals in Brahmin homes. Many were poets and composers and are named in court registers of salaried employees.

The Maratha rulers were composers of dance, music and dramas. Apart from composing several *padas, prabandhas* and *natakas* himself, Shahji's court was a distinguished centre of scholars and poets, musicians and musicologists, dramatists and dancers.

Serfoji I's court was the home of Giriraja Kavi who wrote several compositions utilised for dance. Tukkoji was a liberal giver of gifts to musicians and dancers and his *Sangeetasaramrita,* a Sanskrit work which describes the sixteen groups of *adavus* with their *sollukattus,* paved the way for contemporary *Bharata Natyam.*

Ekoji II was more proficient in literature and music, but was a great admirer of dance, particularly of the dancer Muddmanga who was constantly honoured with gifts of pearl necklaces. Pratapasimha was also a composer whose reign was marked by several musical compositions. It was Tukkoji, his son, who initiated a fresh era of cultural revival. He re-located musicians and dancers living elsewhere to Thanjavur. Shri Mahadeva Annavi, Gangaimuthu and Subbaraya Oduvar, the father of the Thanjavur quartet were great *nattuvanaars* of his court.

Serfoji II's cultural appreciation and enlightenment also extended to the arts. Great musicians, instrumentalists and vocalists, *nattuvanaars* and dancers flocked to his court. There were specific rules for their conduct and even dress and ornamentation. Serfoji composed in Marathi for dance items and patronised several *nattuvanaars.*

Apart from classical music and dance, several semi-classical and folk arts were patronised by the Maratha kings of Thanjavur. These dancers and actors were also given royal grants and salaries.

The *Thyagesha Kuravanji* by an unknown author of Shahji's court reiterates the popularity of the *kuravanji* dance-drama under the Marathas. Several composers wrote in this style, including Serfoji II who wrote the *Devendra Kuravanji.*

Opera *(geyanataka),* combining literature, music and dance was introduced by Shahji I. Known as the *Pallaki Seva Prabandha,* it consisted of puranic stores in praise of Shiva, Vishnu or Thyagaraja. Shahji combined the early tradition of literary *prabandhas* with the *yakshagana* to create the *drishyakavya,* a visual poetic treat conveyed through prose and poetry, song and dance, *abhinaya* and *nritta.* They were performed during the temple processions, as a service to the deity, and were generally in Telugu.

Several *yakshaganas* were performed during this period, many composed by the rulers themselves. The reign of Shahji saw several eminent composers and compositions, including *Satidana Suramu* by the king. Giriraja Kavi wrote the *Lilavati Kalyana,* and proves that this art form commanded sufficient respectability. Tukkoji composed several himself, apart from those composed by his court poets, and his *Shivakamasundari Parinaya* was enacted at the Adivarahaswami temple at Mahadevapattinam.

The *yakshagana* had given rise to the *Bhagavata mela nataka* of Melattur which was patronised by Tukkoji. Melattur Venkataramana Bhagavathar was a respected name in this art form and in 1786 Tukkoji made an endowment for the enactment of this art. By the time of Amarasimha and Serfoji II, the *Bhagavata mela* had become an art form of high standard - Serfoji II continued the tradition of giving gifts to the *Bhagavata mela* dancers and actors. Tepperumanallur, Sulamangalam, Othukaadu, Saliyamangalam and Nidamangalam were also developed as centres of *Bhagavata mela nataka* during Serfoji's time, indicating the growing popularity of this art among dancers and the people.

Lavani singers had come in with early Maratha rule and had flourished in Thanjavur. Serfoji II had a particular liking for Marathi folk songs in *Lavani* style, combining dance and prose. In fact Serfoji took pains to encourage folk art forms such as the *Kuravanji, Therukoothu, Poy Kaal Kudarai* and fifty varieties of *Pinnal Kolattam.* Shivaji II was also a lover of *lavanis* and, himself, formed the theme of several *lavanis.*

It was in the court of Serfoji II that dance took its present form, under the four *nattuvanaar* brothers Chinnayya, Ponnayya, Shivanandam and Vadivelu, famed as choreographers and teachers of dance. With the help of Muthuswami Dikshitar, one of the famed "trinity" of Carnatic music, they devised a basic course for the teaching of dance and structured a balanced concert repertoire. The Thanjavur quartet, as the brothers are known, also created the *kavutvams,* dance compositions used exclusively for temple rituals in honour of the Gods. While there is no doubt that they must have been inspired by earlier traditions, they paved the way for classical dance to outgrow *dasi attam* and become the contemporary *Bharata Natyam.*

Architecture

The Marathas were great builders of *choultries* (or *chatrams*) - rest houses for travellers and pilgrims - besides temples, palaces, forts, tanks and bridges. The records of the number of *chatrams* built in the Maratha period range from 16 to 550, of which 25 still exist. A Modi document of 1838 lists 15 *chatrams,* such as the Rajakumaramba Bai *choultry* built by Tuljaji I at Surakkotai, the Chakvaramba Bai *chatram* at Tribhuvanam, the

Rajakumara Bai *choultry* at Mimisal, the Mohanambalpuram *chatram* at Rajamadam built by Tuljaji II, the Draupadambal *chatram* at Manamerkudi, the Yamunambalpuram *chatram* at Nidamangalam which was also a *Veda pathashala* (school for Vedic studies), an *Upanayana Mandapam*, the Rameshwaram *chatram*, the Sulakshanambalpuram *chatram* at Velangulam, and the Rajasambalpuram *chatram* at Darasuram, all built by Tuljaji II. Other *choultries* included the Umabai *choultry* at Mahadevipattinam, and those at Malliam, Thanjavur, Saidambal, Kumbakonam, Thiruvaiyaru and Lakshmirajapuram. At the Mukkambalapuram *chatram* in Orathanad, pilgrims were fed thrice a day, free marriages were conducted and there were five *Veda pathashalas* with 641 students.

The *chatrams* were built of plastered brick with either stone and mortar vaulted roofs, tiled sloping roofs or flat roofs supported by wooden reapers. The supporting pillars are plain and either square or octagonal, some crowned by sculptured figures. Domed balconies and arches are typical of this period. The *chatrams* have elaborately carved doors, and their own water supply. Each *chatram* was endowed with villages and an elaborate administrative machinery for its maintenance. They provided free food and accommodation for travellers.

The important Maratha temples were the Vithoba Temple at Thiruvaiyaru, the Mariamman Temple at Thanjavur and the Vishalakshi temple at Orathanad. Maratha temples are small and unimpressive, consisting of a small *garba griha* crowned by a dome and entered by a *mandapa*. The dome may be curved, linear (as at Thiruvaiyaru and Thanjavur) or checked (as at Arasur and Rajamadam). The domes are ringed by sculptures of animals, leaving the temple walls bare. Pillars are rare, the small size of the temple not providing much space. The simplicity and functional character of the temples show very definite Maratha influence, brought by the rulers from Central India. The Orathanad temple alone has an unique three-tiered *gopuram* with sculptured niches and a tower surmounted by a row of *kalasams*.

The Marathas added structures to the ancient temples of their state. Most notable is the Nataraja shrine added to the Brihadeeshvara temple and the renovation of the *mandapa* in front of the Ganesha shrine.

Serfoji II built the Schwartz Church within the Sivaganga Fort in memory of his mentor. The church contains a marble tablet in *bas*- relief of Schwartz on his death bed, clasping Serfoji's hand and blessing him, surrounded by two ministers of the Raja and three students of the Schwartz school.

In the Maratha school of architecture, as symbolised by the temples, there is a synthesis of the earlier Vijayanagara and Nayak traditions, the Islamic school of squat pillars and arches and the Maratha style of Central India.

The palaces and forts of the Marathas were of Nayak origin, as is the palace at Thanjavur, which was renovated and added to haphazardly. One notable addition was the *Durbar* Hall east of the Sarasvati Mahal Library (plate 6). Built in 1684 by Shahji II, the Hall is made up of two *mandapas*, the one in front having a wooden sloping tiled roof supported by pillars and the one at the rear having a smooth vault-roof supported by granite pillars plastered with lime and brick. In the centre of the *mandapa*, over the throne, is a wooden canopy decorated with glass pieces, as in the Thanjavur paintings. The ceiling and walls are decorated with exquisite paintings and stucco figures.

The *Sadr Madi*, built by Serfoji II in 1800 in the Thanjavur palace, contains perforated ventilators depicting the rising sun, similar to those of the Thiruvidaimarudhur palace. This four storeyed building contains pillared balconies with heavily ornamented

canopies. The most unique aspect of the building is the way in which the floors reduce in width as they go higher, in the form of a tapering pyramid.

The Sarasvati Mahal Library building re-built by Serfoji, consists of large pillared halls, supported by arches.

If the Marathas were no experts at building temples or palaces, they made up for any defects in the excellent forts they built. Shahji II repaired and strengthened the Thanjavur fort, of which parts are still visible. A well-preserved fort is that at Mahadevipattinam near Mannargudi, built by Tuljaji. A brick structure made up of thick walls and bastions, the sides are sloped, possibly to rain down missiles. Other forts of the Marathas are to be found at Pattukottai, Vallam, Pandanallur, Thirukattupalli, Sakkottai, Devakottai and Mahadevipattinam. The superiority of the forts indicates the utilisation of the Maratha traditions of fort building as seen in Western and Central India.

The eight-storeyed *manora*, built by Serfoji II at Saluvanayakapattinam to commemorate the British victory over Napoleon, is a cross between a tall tower and a small fort. Built on the sea-shore, it was frequently inhabited by Serfoji II and Shivaji II. Made of brick and stone, narrow spiral staircases lead from floor to floor, while the rooms have the typically Maratha arches at the entrances. The most exquisite part of the *manora* is the smooth, white and lustrous finish created by a combination of egg shell and lime.

Several tanks, bridges, wells and bathing *ghats* were also built by the Marathas. Ekoji I was a great builder of tanks, while Shivaji II is credited with the construction of stone bridges built on columns sunk into the river bed at Thiruvaiyaru, over the Kaveri, and over the Kudamuruti, Vettar and Vennar. The bridges, too, have arches. The palaces had a good drainage system made of brick and lime which was even extended to the city of Thanjavur. The Marathas had a fondness, also, for pigeon houses which are found frequently. These are four-storeyed towers tapering towards the top, approached by narrow stairways. The pigeon holes are small and square, through which the birds could fly in and out.

Sculpture

The Maratha period is not noted for the quality of its sculpture, although the temples and palaces contain both stone and stucco figures. The stylisation of the Nayak period still contained folk elements and colouring to enliven the figures. In the Maratha period, the western style of realism was introduced in the depiction of Indian figures, with disastrous consequences.

The statue of Serfoji II in the Thanjavur Art Gallery and the composition of Schwartz on his death bed are totally western in style and depiction and are worth mentioning.

There are records of cast metal icons, many of which abound today. These, too, are of an inferior artistic quality.

There is a record of dolls representing people belonging to eighteen castes being suplied for the *Navaratri kolu*. It is likely that the contemporary dolls made for the *Navaratri* festival were developed at this time.

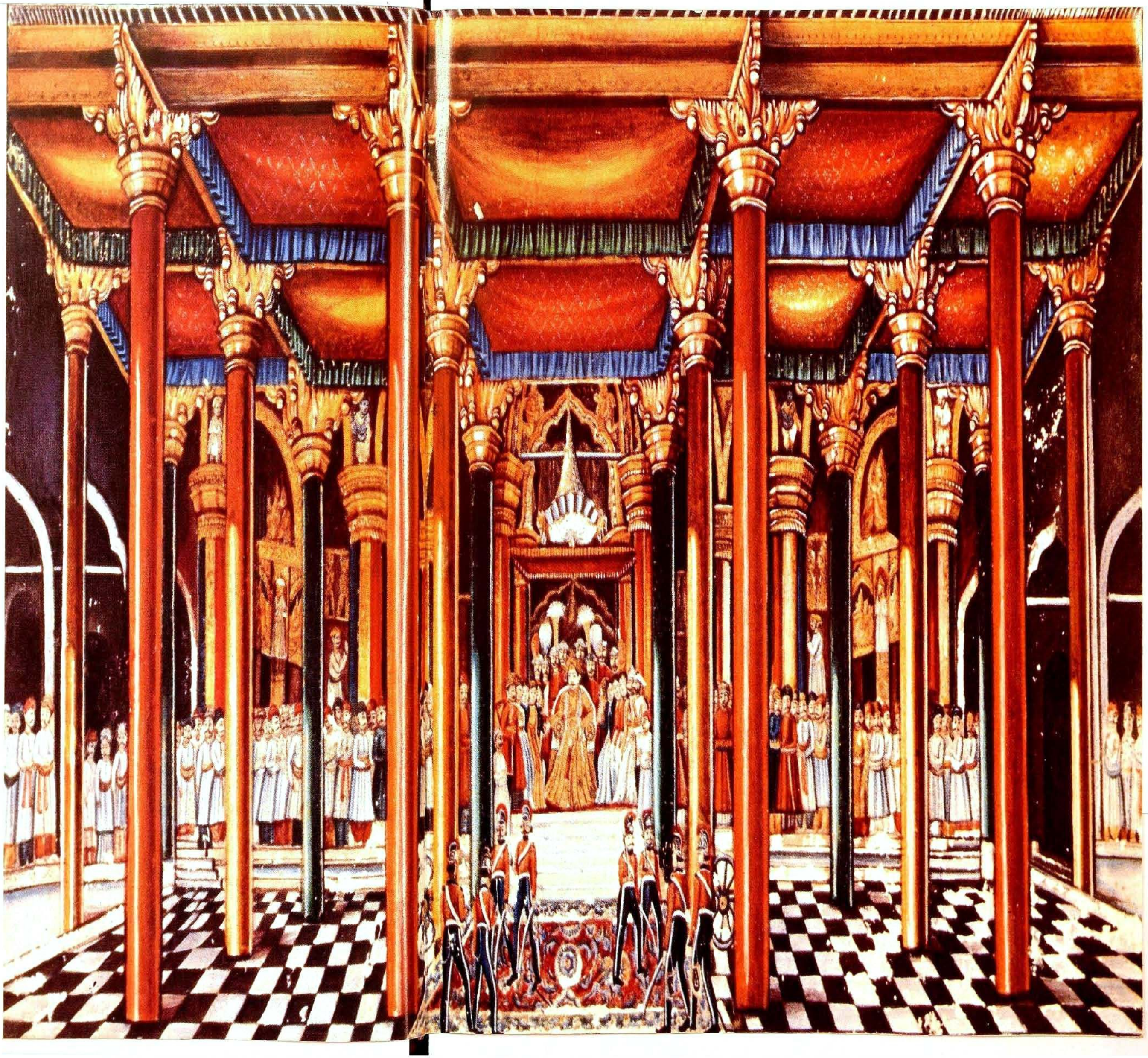


Plate 6: Durbar Hall, Thanjavur Palace

The Thanjavur School of Painting

Indian painting has been divided into two categories: mural paintings encompassing a larger vision to generate the general interest of the public, and paintings on wood, cloth or palm leaf, smaller in size and with greater detail.

The painter or *chitrakara* was a respected member of society and functioned from guilds. Artists were given gifts of land and villages by the ruler. There are references to painters in several Sanskrit works, including the *Uttararamacharita, Harshacharita, Kathasaritsagara, Malavikagnimitra, Kamasutra* and so on. The *Vishnudharmottara* is an entire treatise on the subject. Great masters were known as *chitravidyopadhyayas.* As in all areas of art, the painter dedicated himself to the Lord, effacing his personality. Thus most of the art of ancient India is unsigned and anonymous.

The process of painting was not very different then from what it is now. The artist started with a sketch, filled in the colours, and then did the modelling. The painting was given life by the ritual of *chitronmilan.* While the guild followed a certain style, the artist was either commissioned to do a painting or followed his imagination in recreating stories from the epics and *puranas,* which would provide the moral fabric of society. *Chitrashalas,* or art galleries, were popular among the royalty and nobility. They are mentioned in both the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata,* besides numerous references in Sanskrit and Tamil literature. The galleries were often private, and the themes of the paintings ranged from *shringara* (romantic) to *mangalya* (auspicious).

But the spirit of art was found everywhere in India, whether on a mud pot used to carry water by a village woman, or the horns of a farmer's cow, on the walls of a village hut or on the floor outside the home as a symbol of the auspicious. It was this love for colour and decoration which led to entire walls of temples, monastries and palaces being

painted with allegorical stories from the epics, serving the dual purpose of religious teaching and decoration.

The greatest representations of mural art are to be seen at Ajanta - ranging in time from the Satavahana period (200 B.C.) to the Vakataka (A.D. 600). The paintings of Ajanta represent narrative art at its best. Buddhist theism, in the form of *Jataka* tales, were painstakingly executed with great care, involving a depth of linear quality and shading which conveyed a three-dimensional image to a two-dimensional idiom. The singing lines of Ajanta betray a rhythm of movement that resemble their then Chinese and Central Asian counterparts. The beautifully arched brow, the gentle contours of the figures and the sad eyes of a great man contemplating the sorrows and cruelties of the real world are haunting images of Ajanta.

The legacy of Ajanta travelled southwards and appears, soon after, in traces at Pannamalai and Kanchipuram in paintings of the Pallava period. But, in spite of the unmistakable influences of Ajanta, there were qualitative differences: the half-closed eyes of the Ajanta figures were opening as the gods and their devotees looked at the world around them. The colours, too, were changing. Both were vegetable colours, but the muted, soft shades of Ajanta were giving way to the brighter colours favoured in the south. Not far in time or distance are the Pandya paintings at Thirumalaipuram and Sittannavasal. Not unlike the earlier Ajanta and Pallava paintings, those of the Pandya period continue the tradition of the free, flowing line, continuous and unbroken, enriching the form. There is not much decoration here, but the charm and dignity of the human figures, contrasted with the ferocity of the animals, make them unique.

The southern school was to reach its zenith in the Chola paintings of the Brihadeeshvara Temple. Within the narrow confines of the inner *prakara* of the main *vimana*, the artist created animated images, enormous in size and rich in technique, with a natural abstraction that was nearly twentieth century in conception and strongly folk in execution. The figures are dramatic in movement, lavishly decorative in style and rich in form and content. They form excellent records of the Chola period.

A gigantic Tripurantaka, chariot-driven by Brahma, flashes his flaming eyes, rushing undaunted into war, to destroy the evil demons. Shiva as Yogadakshinamurthi is a picture of dignified serenity and grace. There are countless slender-waisted and animated dancers in various *bhangas* of Indian dance. Such are the Chola paintings at Thanjavur.

The establishment of the Vijayanagara kingdom in A.D. 1335 was of major significance. Painting was given a major impetus wherever Vijayanagara's influence extended, and this was as far as the Tamil country. The sites are many : Lepakshi, Kanchipuram, Somapalayam, Hampi and many more. In the paintings of the Vijayanagara period, there is less emphasis on line and more on colour, content and decoration, all of which are equally rich. The emotive quality of the Chola paintings is still there on occasion, but the Vijayanagara love for the *baroque* overrides it. Stylisation creeps in for the first time – many figures are stiff, unyielding, unexpressive and formatted. The artist has paid greater attention to the story and detail.

With the rout of Vijayanagara by the confederacy of Deccan Sultanates, the artists dispersed. Some went north and to the west, to influence the Deccani and Maratha schools of painting, others to Mysore where they were given shelter and encouragement and were to develop the Mysore school of painting. Many travelled south to the security and patronage of the Nayak principalities. They were to finally congregate at the court of the Maratha rulers of Thanjavur, who longed to commission and support artists.

Nayak paintings are elaborate and stylised, with practically no emotive quality. The faces are wide-eyed

and vacant, staring placidly at the viewer, totally unmoved by the dynamism of the situation, such as the Shiva *tandava*, or a war or a love scene. Important sites of Nayak painting include the Brihadeeshvara Temple at Thanjavur, the later Jaina paintings at Thirupparuthikunram, the Thiruvarur temple with its ceiling illustration of the story of Muchukunda, the Chidambaram, Cuddappah and Thiruvalanjuli temples, among many others.

The Nayak period forms an important part of this study, for many of the styles of the succeeding Maratha period were set at this time. The art of continuous miniaturised narration, the use of dramatic, contrasting colours (in contrast to the earlier preference for softer complementing shades), and the habit of describing each scene in detail, whether in Tamil or Telugu, were developed at this time.

The art of miniature painting also goes back in time, in Indian tradition. There is a reference to a miniature of a young lady in the *Dashakumaracharita* written by Dandin in the 7th century A.D. Unfortunately, few ancient paintings on wood, cloth or palm leaf remain, the earliest available belonging to the Pala school of the 8th century A.D.

It would be of greater relevance to discuss the Jaina miniatures of Gujarat in Western India, between the 11th and 15th centuries A.D. It was these which were to travel northwards to produce the Rajput school, to combine with Persian elements to produce the Mughal school, and to travel southwards to produce the Maratha manuscript covers of western India and the painted manuscripts of Thanjavur.

The early miniatures two-dimensionalised the representations, producing flat compositions which gave greater importance to the human figure, sacrificing the harmony and the fluid lines of the great murals. The characters were dominant and visible, the purpose being to portray the maximum. Thus the three-quarter visages, earlier displayed in profile, had a second protruding eye from the non-visible portion. The figures were rigid and angular. The warm, muted colours of Ajanta gave way to flat, bright colours which stood out in contrast to the flat, luminous backgrounds. However, the human figures still followed the canons of Indian art: broad shouldered and slim-waisted men, opulently curved women. But, most important, was the role of decoration, be it ornamentation, land-scape or even mere borders. These were rich and elaborate, heavily stylised and baroque.

The Rajput and Mughal schools of miniature painting are the well-known descendants of the Jaina manuscript painters.

Slightly less known is the Deccani School of Central India which was to influence manuscript painting. Between 1565 and 1569, the *Tarif-e-Husain-Shahi* was painted in Ahmednagar, commissioned by Sultan Husain Nizam Shah. It is the earliest extant illustrated work from Maharashtra, an eulogy of his queen Humayun, and a record of the battle of Talikota. The women's attire and their wide-eyed appearance indicate the Vijayanagara influence, while the high, curved horizon and flowering plants in the background portray the Persian tradition. However, the manuscript is hardly derivative in style: all the influences have been fused into the Deccani idiom. A 1733 Jaina manuscript of the *Chandana Maliyagiri Katha* from Karanja in Maharashtra is very interesting in its positive resemblance to Maratha manuscript paintings. The figures are flat and two-dimensional, the colours are bright and contrasting, with absolutely no shading.

Maratha Paintings of Western India

Marathi is a late variant of Maharashtrian Prakrit with a history going back to the 12th century A.D. The early literature is primarily devotional and philosophic.

There are several references to mural painting in early Marathi literature, such as those in the

Picharashthala, the *Leelacharita* of Chakradhara, the *Smrithisthala* and the *Rukmini Swayamvara,* composed in 1292. A later *Rukmini Swayamvara* by Krishmanuri in 1602 describes the *chitrashalas* or halls with wall paintings depicting the gods, various types of people and erotic postures.

The *Ashanayika Vivah* of Alhana, also of the seventeenth century, describes the *chitrashalas* of the palace of Jambavan, where scenes from the *Ramayana* were depicted. In the Jnaneshwari, the poet compares every limb of the Lord to a wall portraying fourteen worlds. In fact, this work often refers to mural paintings to explain abstract ideas.

The *Anubhavamrith* and the *Ushaharana* are some of the other texts which refer to mural painting. The latter, composed in 1400 A.D. by Chobha, describes the technique used by Chitralekha. She first sticks a piece of cloth over which she applies two coats of lime. A final coat of clay provides a smooth surface for painting. After this, the surface is varnished with powder to smoothen it. For painting she used *shadi* (white), *pachi* (green), *hingula* (vermillion), *alitha* (red lac), *nili* (indigo blue), *manseel* (red arsenic) and *masi* (black). Gum was the medium for the pigments and cotton pads were used to apply large patches of colour.

It is interesting that the technique of cloth being stuck on the wall before painting, a procedure which disappeared subsequently, is known in the early paintings of Western India, such as those in Ajanta Cave No. 11, where pieces of cloth have been found in the plaster on the walls. The popular themes for the murals were the Dashavatara, Indira on Airavatha, scenes from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and so on.

The Marathas of Western India had a preference for illustrated horoscopes, *pata* paintings and illustrated wooden book covers. The horoscopes were scrolls containing pictures of the *rashis* and the *grahas.* The *patas* are small sheets of paper about two feet square and were developed in Nasik and Wai. It is divided into three frames, the middle one being slightly larger. This generally contains Ganesha or the main deity. The *patas* became very popular between 1810 and 1835 A.D. In the *pata* tradition, the whole space is treated as one, the incidents depict the chronological sequence. No scene is demarcated in separate frames. While the tradition was ancient, the figures, costumes and other details were all locally inspired. An unique painting is the *Pithori vrata pata.*

The book covers were made of wood and conformed to the size of the manuscripts. They were painted and covered with lacquer in a bright shade of red, upon which they were painted in black, yellow and green. As in the *patas,* the most common motif was that of Ganesha flanked by Siddhi and Buddhi depicted as *chauri* bearers, holding large whisks in their hands. Ganesha is often replaced by Krishna and the Gopis.

While the early art tradition of Maharashtra involved painting over large surfaces, such as the walls of palaces, temples and homes, miniature painting became popular in Maharashtra only after A.D. 1750. The style received its impetus from Shahu, grandson of Shivaji, who had learnt the luxuries of court life during his captivity by the Mughals. This was furthered by Baji Rao, whose mistress was famed for her artistic accomplishments. Thus royal patronage for art came into existence only at this time among the Marathas. The literature of the period describes murals, illustrated books *(chitramanya pothi)* and portraits *(tasveer).*

There were also several paintings of divinities such as Shiva and Parvathi or Kaliyamardana Krishna and, of course, Ganesha.

The Nasik paintings had a distinct colour. The figures were short, with large heads and dressed in typical Maratha costumes such as the turban and nine yard saree.

They were washed in shades of red, pale green and turmeric yellow with harsh lime.

Most well-known of the Maratha paintings are the *tala* paintings with elements of Maratha culture combined with line drawings and colour schemes of the later Deccani school.

A popular subject was the *ghats* of Varanasi, many of which were constructed by eminent Marathas, such as Ahalyabai of Indore. These were reproduced in miniature and all the details were filled in very carefully. In the paintings of the gods, western influence is very obvious. Some of the paintings have small holes through which light penetrates, when held against a window, to create an illusion of light along a terrace or through a grill.

An illustrated *Bhagavata Purana* of 1800, commissioned by the Bhonsles of Nagpur, is a highly decorative work combining northern and southern styles. Like the Maratha manuscripts of Thanjavur, they are framed by a floral border, with the imagery and text within, the whole burnished with gold. At Pune, there was a native school of illustration, utilised for manuscripts and book covers. Consisting of Puranic subjects, it had the vibrancy of folk art combined with religious fervour.

Miniature painting in Maharashtra lacked the vibrancy of the Rajput school, the exquisite delicacy of the Pahadi or the sophistication of the Mughal. But it had an idiom of its own, combining all these elements as well as the heritage of Vijayanagara. It was spread out over a fairly large geographic area – Ahmednagar, Aurangabad, Nagpur, Pune, Kolhapur, (including Satara, Wai and Nasik), Sholapur, Savantvadi and Warli. Although the paintings are relatively recent in age, the existence of so many centres of non-mural painting - i.e., paintings on wood, cloth or manuscripts - indicates a deeper tradition which probably travelled south with the Marathas to Thanjavur.

The Deccani School of miniature painting, patronised by the Bahmani Sultans, left their mark on the Thanjavur style, in the stiff formal compositions which are alien to South Indian painting, the symbolic architectural backgrounds and borders, and the lavish use of gold.

There is yet one more school which influenced the Thanjavur style: that of the west. This was a period when Indian states and institutions were falling to a few entrepreneurs and adventurers from Europe, particularly the English. They brought with them a love of landscape painting which was integrated with the Thanjavur school, although adapted to Indian themes and ideals of beauty.

The artists of the Maratha period were Rajus, Kshatriyas of Telugu origin who fled when Vijayanagara fell. There were two branches of Rajus who were to produce two similar yet distinct schools of painting, the Thanjavur and the Mysore.

There were also two immediate influences on the Thanjavur school, the art of hand-painted calico or *Kalamkari* which made its appearance in the 16th century at Nizampatnam, Pulicat and Kalahasti, and the religious paintings of Tirupati. In the former style, the space is divided into cusped arches flanked by pillars or minarets, with each space used for a single subject. This cusped archway continues into Maratha architecture. There is an excess of floral borders and random decorations, while the wide-eyed, expressionless, two-dimensional figures are typical of both the *Kalamkari* and Thanjavur schools. The *Kalamkari* paintings were and are heavily stylised, with stiff and unyielding figures. Thanjavur reflects the same style. The latter school indicates several interesting iconic variations, all obviously derived, in some way, from Vijayanagara. There is a melange of arches and temples, of stiff, stylised deities and the robust realism of human activities. The iconography of the Tirupati paintings is not unlike those of Thanjavur, although

there may be variations from Vijayanagara. Obviuously, then, the painters of Vijayanagara who fled in different directions retained their contacts, besides which the common religious developments of the period would have developed a common idiom.

Thanjavur Paintings

Thanjavur paintings are of four types:
1) Wall paintings
2) Paintings on wood, generally decorated with gold embellishment, semi-precious stones and glass
3) Paintings on glass
4) Miniature paintings.

Whatever the genre, there are certain distinct features which characterize all Thanjavur paintings. Like all Indian art, they are painted with a purpose, generally religious. Secular art is limited and restricted to portraits of kings and patrons. Only Serfoji II encouraged true secular painting like the herbarium, birds and so on.

The compositions are highly stylised, following the canons of iconography, giving little or no room for innovation by the artist.

The figures are stiff and static, consisting of one main figure completely dominating the painting. Other figures - spouses, attendants or devotees - are minuscule in scale. The figures are plump and robust - the Thanjavur painter was not enamoured of slim people.

The backgrounds are always conventionalised, either arched to convey a temple or *mandapa,* or curtained, or bordered with repetitive designs. They circumscribe the available space, increasing the stiff, stylised effect.

The figures are of a two-dimensional quality, with no features to convey depth or dimension.

The line work is strong and powerful, the outlines are dark and definite. The colours are strong and flat, with the dominant figure in a lighter colour such as white or yellow against a red, blue or green background.

Skin tones, however, are shaded, to further accentuate the rotundity of the figure. Gold plays a major part in the decoration. A religious figure may have a full *kavacha* of gold and a golden *mandapa,* while human figures of kings or *chauri* bearers have elaborate gold ornamentation. In the early period, the use of gold was limited. The popularity of the gem-encrusted paintings increased the use of gold in the later periods.

Most Thanjavur painting was court painting, and the resulting popularity of portraiture extended to the gods themselves. Thus the popular *Ramapattabhishekham* paintings, for example, are static court scenes, with Rama and Sita seated on the Maratha throne. Even the famous Balakrishna paintings are a form of portraiture, with the over-sized child-God posing on his royal bed for the artist.

There is a positive blending of folk art in the Thanjavur style, firstly through the *Kalamkari* influence which, in spite of its stiffness and stylisation, had an earthy quality which conveys the happiness of folk art, and, secondly, in the manuscript itself, with its vivid and strong depictions of emotive situations such as the horrors of a war or the celebration of a wedding.

Wall Paintings

A visitor to the Sarasvati Mahal Library is first struck by the enormous mural at the entrance. Such murals are to be found in several buildings

of the Maratha period, including the wall before the Kartikeya shrine in the Brihadeeshvara Temple, and in the Thanjapurishvara Temple at Thanjavur, the Muktambal *chatram* (named after Serfoji II's favourite concubine) at Orathanad, the Kalyana Mahal at Thiruvaiyaru and elsewhere. The paintings are framed within an architectural unit, like an arched entrance wall, where a single theme is painted. The subjects were Hindu deities and, occasionally, royalty.

The murals show the deities seated on a throne, below an arched canopy, on glittering pillars. Other items of interior decoration include bolsters, chandeliers, chintz curtains, stools, benches and carpets. Thus the style of court painting, mentioned earlier, was unaffected by the size of the painting.

The artists used vegetable colours, the most popular being white, red, green, blue and indigo, with a profusion of gold everywhere.

The emphasis in these mural paintings is on the icon. However, their architectural positioning indicates that their decorative use was also considered, as there was no other attempt to decorate these great bare walls.

There is a departure from the stiff, silent paintings of frozen figures in the Avudaiyar shrine, where the Maratha ceiling paintings are absolutely grandiose in size, created to awe the devotee with the might of the Lord. Yet another deviation is to be seen in the Thanjapurishvara temple. Here, in a rare composition, the artist has achieved an animation and spontaneity unknown in the Maratha period.

Narrative art too, is rare. Most of the paintings, in the manner of Hindu sculpture, are events frozen in time. An exception to this rule is to be seen at Thanjapurishvara temple, with its continuous composition and movement.

Paintings on Wood

If the murals were stiff and static, the paintings on wood are similarly formal portraiture, whether the subject was a deity or a king.

There are several portraits of the Maratha kings. An early one of Ekoji I (plate 2) shows the king sitting informally. There is no shading to create contours, the robust figure of the king speaking for itself. There is no depth, although the artist has used foreshortening. The predominant use of white conveys a cool appearance to the painting.

The exotic use of colour in the painting of the *Durbar* Hall (plate 6) animates an otherwise dull subject, conveying the grandeur and beauty of what it must have been.

The unique contribution of the Thanjavur school of painting is the use of gold leaf, along with gem encrustations, to embellish jewellery, drapery and architectural features. In the early portraits of the Maratha rulers, beaten gold leaf was used, pasted with gum and rubbed over with a smooth stone. But this method, though copied and still popular in the Mysore school, fell into disuse as a new technique of raised embossing, as in low relief, covered with gold paper and embedded with semi-precious stones or cut glass, became more popular.

These paintings date from the middle of the 18th century A.D. to the middle of the 19th century. They were painted on wood. The surface to be painted on was prepared with a coating of gum arabic, chalk powder, copper sulphate, and *'gopi'* (yellow powder) and then smoothened with a rounded stone or glass, to prepare an absolutely smooth surface. The sketch was made in charcoal, prepared by heating and charring the twigs of the tamarind tree.

The colours were prepared out of leaves, flowers and minerals. Minerals were powdered in a mortar,

soaked in water and ground to a fine paste. Primary colours were mixed by grounding and blending in the mortar.

Brushes were generally made of squirrel's hair, although finer lines were drawn with a pointed blade of a special variety of grass.

After the sketch was made, the farthest objects, such as the sky or river, were painted first. Human figures needed greater clarity and attention to detail, particularly the dress and ornamentation. This is how the stiffness crept in. Animal figures, on the other hand, played minor roles and had little or no embellishment. Thus there was a certain degree of animation in their depiction.

It is the embellishment, then and now, that distinguishes Thanjavur paintings. The *gesso* work was most important. The work was taken up in the morning when the base and foil were moist. The surface of the painting was raised, where necessary, with the base mixture, and covered with gold foil. Where the foil extended beyond the margin, colour was used to cover it. The gold leaf was actually handmade paper coated with silver leaf and exposed to the smoke of saffron and other herbs. This gilt paper was not only used on paintings, but also on picture frames, *pooja* objects and temple *vahanas.*

The portrait was regarded as a picture, and the theme subjugated to the decorative effect. Thus the main figure is disproportionately larger than the others, drawing the viewer's attention. The best examples are the Balakrishna paintings, the blue-hued god now white with the general preference for white skins, flanked by small women, such as Rukmini and Satyabhama or *chauri* bearers. Other popular subjects were the Rama *pattabhishekham,* Uma Maheshvara, Ganesha and so on. The families of the original Rajus continue this tradition in Thanjavur till today.

The painting of Sarasvati (plate 1, frontispiece), the emblem of the Library itself, is one of the greatest examples of this school. The colours and the embellishment are muted, though striking. Even the stiff, unyielding pose and expression have been toned down to depict a gentle and soft goddess.

These paintings could be moved, hung on the wall and worshipped, which made them popular for the household *pooja,* where the *shastraic* rules limited the use of metal figures over a certain size and the mode of worship to them. The religious revival required the prominent display of one's faith and religious participation. The Thanjavur paintings on wood ably fitted this requirement, hence their popularity.

These paintings also determined the style of the illustrations. The same rotund bodies, the wide-eyed, stylised faces, the enlargement of the main figure in comparison to the others and the liberal use of gold characterise the illustrations of the manuscripts as they do the Thanjavur paintings and portraits on wood.

Paintings on Glass

Painting on glass was popular in Europe, and is believed to have come to India from China. It is believed that some Chinese artists visited India, where they were commissioned to paint rich kings and noblemen. The subjects range from religious themes to portraits of men and women.

The glass paintings were difficult to execute, as the sequence of events were reversed. Thus, after the sketch, came the shading, and then the decoration with glass or gold paper (if used). Finally, the empty portions were filled in with paint and a border painted around each subject.

This reversal of procedure resulted in a flat, doll-like appearance and a single-dimensional quality. The religious paintings come off worst, as the complicated symbolism and the many subsidiary

figures of the other world could not be confined so easily.

The figures of women consist of a whole range of dancers, courtesans and nobility. The features and body are flat, the hands and feet abnormally small in comparison to the body. The artist concentrated on the face which became doll-like and unimpressive.

The best paintings of this genre are the portraits. The artist strove to portray the dignity of the nobleman or the royalty of the king. A good example of this is a painting of Raja Serfoji II. In tones of grey and orange, decorated with gems and gold, the illustration of the king in his regalia, with the background of draperies, is an excellent depiction of royalty as conceived in the 19th century.

Interestingly, it is in the depiction of scenes of Krishna and Yashoda that the aspirations of ordinary people are expressed and an animation creeps into the glass paintings for the first time. In one painting Krishna climbs on his mother's knee, in another Yashoda dances while Krishna pulls her hair. Both are smiling and happy, a scene of any mother and child.

Glass Paintings of Western India

Painting on glass became popular in the 18th century in Maharashtra. It was introduced by Chinese artists who lived in Mysore, Bombay, Kutch and Indore, in the last quarter of the 18th century. Indians learnt the technique and started producing their own paintings. The glass paintings of Maharashtra are gentle and simple with only one main figure either shown in full length or only the head and bust. There is no complexity of composition and the background is simple. The chief colours used were red, blue and green, with a background of pastel colours to set them off. The head is highly finished while the body, in contrast, is very casually drawn and painted, practically ignored at the time of finishing.

Glass paintings were either court or religious paintings. The court paintings have a strong western influence, with colour gradations and soft colours. There are several portraits, very simply done, with occasional heavy decorations. They are large in size, and the decorated ones display a lot of ostentatious gold work.

Religious paintings were most popular. The pictures are very small iconographic depictions of Hindu Gods and Goddesses. It was a very popular art form because of its functional nature, and dominated the domestic *pooja.* These paintings were of the deity to whom the rituals were performed, and dominated the *pooja* or ritual.

There is also a set of paintings such as courtesans with or without their lovers, musicians and mother-and-child scenes. They are original, and were not restricted either by the formality of folk painting or by the iconographic rules of religious painting.

The Maratha glass paintings of Western India and those of southern India are very distinctly different in style and features, though similar in technique. The southern paintings were wide-eyed, large-faced, and doll-like, while the western Indian paintings were more casually drawn with long eyes and small mouths. There was more decoration in the former and every feature and outline was finished in great detail. The latter, on the other hand, were very amateurish and casual.

Glass painting became extinct after 1900 and was revived only in the second half of the 20th century.

Miniature Paintings

Miniature paintings, comparatively the smallest of the various types of paintings of this period, are to be seen on ivory, mica and playing cards and, most important, in the illustrated manuscripts of the Sarasvati Mahal Library.

Paintings on ivory were popular in Patna and Delhi. The ivory pieces were within six inches in length and thin, requiring great skill because of the polished surface The artists of Thanjavur developed this skill and painted miniatures of royalty and religious figures on ivory, many of the latter sold as souvenirs to foreign tourists at Srirangam.

Another northern India medium borrowed by the artists of Thanjavur was mica, used for painting souvenirs and mementoes. Most of these are of festivals, birds, butterflies and temples. They were sold in the temple of Srirangam.

A popular form of Maratha painting was that on the *ganjifa* cards, particularly of Savantvadi, where they were manufactured. They were very colourful with strong primary colours such as red, green, blue, black and white. The faces of the various characters were very distinctly drawn with black lines while the limbs were dealt with far more casually.

Of two sets of playing cards of the Maratha period at Thanjavur, one consists of secular figures such as an elephant and rider, a horse and rider, a royal figure and some other general characters. The symbol (heart, spade, diamond or club) is restricted to a corner. The figures are quite realistic and carefully painted by hand. The European influence is quite obvious here.

Another set consists of forty five rectangular cards rounded at the edges. The cards consist of strong reds and greens, with the dominant figure in white. The figure may be an animal or an *avatara* of Vishnu, like the cards of Savantvadi in Maharashtra, but they lack the highly stylised and varnished effect of the latter.

The most important of the miniatures were the painted manuscripts which belong, primarily, to the rule of Serfoji II, although some are older.

The miniaturisation here is of three types. Firstly, three *khandas* of the *Chitra Ramayana - Bala, Ayodhya* and *Aranya* (plates 7, 16, 17) - are reproduced in a continuous series of pictures. Although it is apparently narrative in style, it is not actually continuous, as each incident is framed within a distinct box.

A second type of miniaturising manuscripts is that of the *Angada Shishtayee* (plate 18), consisting of two lines of text at the top, leaving the rest of the page to a glittering scene of Angada at the court of Ravana. The painted area is divided into three by the clever use of pillars. One area consists of the courtiers, the middle consists of a magnificent ten-headed Ravana in dark blue and gold, and the third of Angada seated royally on a throne made of his tail.

Yet another form of illustrating manuscripts is to be seen in the *Dasabhodha* of the *Atmarama Grantha.* The title occupies the central panel, with Shivaji on the left and Sant Ramdas on the right. The page is surrounded by a floral border, with gold and simple embellishments.

Finally, there are the wooden covers of manuscripts, such as the *Rig Veda* and the *Mahabharata,* which were illustrated lavishly. The *Rig Veda* contains scenes of Shaivite lore such as the *Thiruvilaiyadal,* while the *Mahabharata* was illustrated with dramatic scenes from the story.

These illustrated paper manuscripts are inheritors of the earlier Gujarati, Vijayanagara, Maharashtrian and Deccani traditions, perhaps going back even further in time.

Plate 7: Chitra Ramayana – Bala khanda

Painted Manuscripts of the Sarasvati Mahal Library

In ancient India, literature and other official documents were written by hand on palm leaves. They were preserved by *pandits* and scholars in *gurukulas,* temples and *maths,* besides the palaces of kings who were proud to be known as men of art and literature. Palace libraries were commonly known as *Sarasvati Bhandara* and were repositories of manuscripts and palm leaves written during the rule of that king.

The Thanjavur Maharaja Serfoji's Sarasvati Mahal Library was started as a royal palace library during the rule of Raghunatha Nayak, between 1535 and 1673 A.D. Taken over by the Maratha kings of Thanjavur in 1676 with the ascendancy of Ekoji, the palace and the library were developed by the subsequent Maratha kings.

Influenced by the Danish Missionary, Rev. Father Schwartz, Serfoji II was a great scholar and an enthusiastic book collector. He went on a pilgrimage to Benares between 1820 and 1830, where he employed *pandits* to buy and copy a great number of works from all the renowned centres of Sanskrit learning in Northern and Eastern India.

In 1868, the Government of Madras was directed to examine, purchase or transcribe Sanskrit manuscripts in Indian libraries. This task was given to Mr. Pickford, Professor of Sanskrit, who fell ill and had to return to Europe thereafter. In 1871, Dr. Burnell, District and Sessions Judge, was appointed to catalogue the Sanskrit Library at Thanjavur and, with a great deal of research and devotion, he brought out a classified index to the Sanskrit manuscripts in the palace at Thanjavur, published in three parts between 1878 and 1880. However, several manuscripts seem to have been omitted from this catalogue.

In the course of his work, Dr. Burnell wrote this of the Library : "It may perhaps be asked if the Library is worth the labour spent on it. I can answer

unhesitatingly that it is. It is now a recognised fact that nearly all Sanskrit works of importance exist in different recensions. The Thanjavur Library is unrivalled in this respect; it contains several good manuscripts of all the most important ones known as yet, including a few that are new... The Thanjavur Library, however, contains additional manuscripts of most of the works which I had discovered elsewhere, and this is a matter of great importance."

When the last of the Thanjavur Maharajas and his wife died, leaving no direct male heir, the Library, along with the other properties, became involved in civil litigation. When the litigation is pending before the Sub-ordinate court, Thanjavur, all the parties in the suit came forward to delete the Library from the suit properties, form an Endowment and dedicated this Library to public with one lakh of rupees for the maintenance and upkeep.Accordingly the Government of Madras framed a scheme in G.O. Ms.No.1306 Home (Education) dated 5.10.1918, and set up a five member committee under the Ex-officio Chairmanship of the District Collector to maintain the Library. The name of the Library was changed to Thanjavur Maharaja Serfoji's Sarasvati Mahal Library.

In 1983, the Library was declared a National Institution and registered under the Society's Act of 1975, consisting of ex-officio members of both the Central and State Governments, nominated scholars, a member of the king's family and the Director of the Library, who is also the Secretary of the Society. The Library is funded by the Tamil Nadu Government for maintenance and by the Government of India for development.

Apart from the manuscripts collected by Serfoji, the Library has been enriched by the Kagalkar collection, the Jambunatha Bhat Landagai collection and the Patanga Avadhuta collection. More than 11 scripts from all over India are used in the manuscripts, besides a number of books in all the Indian and European languages. The Library has been described by the Encyclopaedia Brittanica in its survey of the Libraries of the world as "the most remarkable Library in India".

The library has over 44,000 manuscripts in palm leaf and paper, a bulk of which are in Sanskrit, Marathi, Tamil and Telugu. They include :

1. A collection of works on the arts, science and literature of the Tamils.
2. A collection of works of the Vijayanagara renaissance of the Nayak period of Thanjavur, between A.D. 1535 and 1673.
3. A collection of works written by scholars in the reign of the Nayak and Maratha kings of Thanjavur, between 1535 and 1855.
4. A collection made by Maharaja Serfoji II from all over India.
5. Later collections from the families of great scholars.

The medical manuscripts are a valuable collection based on the medical records and progress made in the Dhanvantari Mahal, written by famous Tamil scholars like Kottaiyur Sivakkolundu Desikar.

There are 3060 Marathi manuscripts which deal with subjects like philosophy, literature, music, medicine, and science. Besides these, 850 Marathi manuscripts are written in the *Modi* script.

Most of the 766 Telugu manuscripts are on palm-leaf and include *Padya Kavyas, Dvipada Kavyas, Prabhandas,* Telugu classics, etc.

But the largest collection in the library consists of about 36,923 Sanskrit works ranging from the

Vedas to literature produced directly under the patronage of the Telugu and the Marathi Rajas of Thanjavur. Among the outstanding works are:

1. The grammar of a rare dialect called *Bhandira-bhasha.*
2. The *Vivarana darpana* of Rangaraja, father of the famous Appayya Dikshita.
3. The play *Jambavati Parinaya* of King Krishnadevaraya.
4. *Krishnacharita* of Agastiya Pandita.
5. *Bhava purushottama* of Ratnakheta Srinivasa Dikshita (an allegorical play).
6. *Tattva Chintamanivyakhya* (logic) by Dharma Vijayadhvarin.
7. Ramabhadramma's biographical poem on her patron, King Raghunatha Nayak.
8. *Varttikabharana (Mimamsa)* of Venkatamakhin.
9. Ramabhadra Dikshita and Sadashiva Brahmendra Sarasvati's works.
10. Short *Advaita Prakarnas.*

Several manuscripts, paper or palm leaf, carry post-scripts containing historical, biographical and other information regarding owners, copyists, date of copying, etc. Manuscript No.7685, for example, contains information about the great Sadashiva Brahmendra Sarasvati and his blessings to the kings of Thanjavur. There is a manuscript which belonged to the great Appayya Dikshita and some others which originally belonged to the famous Kavindaracharya Sarasvati of Benares who held discussions with Shahjahan and Dara Shikoh according to the superscript on these manuscripts.

The manuscripts have been classified as:

1. Palm leaf manuscripts
2. Paper manuscripts
3. Drawings and books on botanical & zoological subjects.

Palm Leaf Manuscripts

Palm leaves were commonly used as writing material in ancient India and were known as *tada patra, tala patra* or *panna.* The leaves of the palm tree, available all over India, were collected and dried and cut into the same convenient length. Two holes were made to pass a string which tied the leaves together. The leaves were boiled or steamed in hot water, dried, and buried under wet sand. This process of seasoning was essential to soften the palm leaf and make it fit to be written on. The dried leaves were polished with conch shells and given two external wooden covers as a guard.

The written matter was inscribed with a stylus *(salaka)* made of metal, with a pointed end for writing and a knife on the other end for cutting the leaves. After writing, the surface of the leaf was covered with a mixture of charcoal and vegetable juice to make the words visible. Another method of writing, influenced by the north, was with a wooden or bamboo pen dipped in ink. The palm leaves were then hung over the smoking stoves in kitchens or covered with vegetables juices or margosa leaves to repel insects.

The oldest palm leaf manuscripts in the library are:

1. *Gadyachintamani,* written by Vadibhasilshma, a Jain, around A.D. 1550, although the manuscript itself does not bear any date.

2. The *Phalavati,* a glossary on the *Poorva Mimamsa Sutra* of Sage Jaimini. *Mimamsa* is one of the six important schools of philosophy, where truth has to be reached scientifically for a comprehension of life. *Mimamsa* means reflection, and Jaimini formalised the principles of the *Purva Mimamsa* school through his *sutras.* A few leaves are missing but, as most have lost their numbers and are badly damaged, it would take a very minute examination to decide

which are lost (plate 8), On page 41 of his *South Indian Palaeography,* Dr.Burnell says "The oldest manuscript I have been able to discover is Thanjavur 9594 which must be about 1600 A.D." The manuscript itself does not bear any date.

3. An interesting palm leaf manuscript is a *Ramayana* as a marvel of scriptorial art. This *Ramayana* is written in 24 to 29 lines to a leaf in Grantha character.

4. The *Jivakachintamani,* a Tamil *kavya* (No.145) by Thiruttaka Thevar (a Jaina) with a commentary by Naccinarkkiniyar, believed to have been copied in the *Saka* year 1625 (A.D. 1703), from an original which was itself copied in the *Saka* year 1550 (A.D. 1628).

5. The *Pancha Pakshi Shastra,* a miniature, a tiny palm leaf manuscript, the smallest in the library. It deals with the astrologic predictions of five birds (plate 9).

6. The 24,000 shlokas of Valmiki's *Ramayana* preserved in the Grantha script on a bundle of palm leaves. Kambar's Tamil *Ramayana* was written in Tamil by Vasudeva Pillai in A.D. 1719, consisting of seven *kandas* on 537 leaves.

7. A rare manuscript – Nammalvar's *Thiruvaymozhi Vachakamalai* written in *Manipravala* with a commentary of Koneri Dasyai. The palm leaf contains a drawing of Lord Ranganatha on his serpent Ananta, with Lakshmi beside him, the whole drawn with a stylus. This is the only available manuscript of Nammalvar's work.

The scripts used in the palm leaf manuscripts are Grantha, Devanagari, Nandinagari, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada & Oriya.

The Tamil palm leaf manuscripts, numbering 2991, include:

1. Rare commentaries on Sangam works

Plate 8: Phalavati, a palm leaf manuscript

Plate 9: Panchapakshi Shastra, a miniature palm leaf manuscript

Plate 10: Line board used for writing

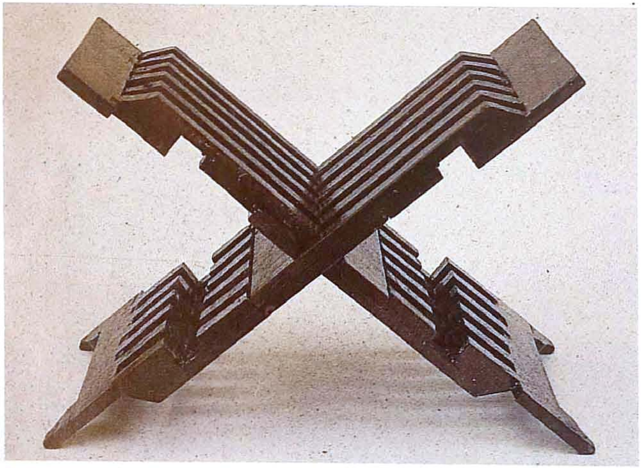


Plate 11: Book stand

2. Classical Tamil literature
3. Shaiva, Vaishnava and Jaina works
4. Later poetry
5. Medical treatises.

Some of the earlier Tamil manuscripts are written in *Manipravala*.

Paper Manuscripts

Paper was introduced quite late in India, but had appeared by the time Ekoji I took over Thanjavur. It was made by hand from cellulose vegetable material; *masi* or *mela* was the ink used for writing, available in red, black, gold and silver. The permanent black ink was prepared by mixing the lamp soot of sesamum oil with the gum of *vachelia farnesiana* water. The pens were made of either wood, bamboo or goose quill. The papers were dipped in turmeric water for protection from insects. The paper manuscripts, as well as their wooden covers, were beautifully illustrated in the Maratha period. The papers were pressed against a wooden board with lines of string to provide lines for writing on, while the pen rested in its case (plate 10). A wooden cross-over stand was used for resting books while reading (plate 11).

The oldest paper manuscript in the library is the *Bhamati* (plate 12), a commentary on Adi Shankara's *Bhashya* by Vachaspati Mishra. It was written in A.D. 1468 at Benares and was acquired by Serfoji II. The story goes that Vachaspati Mishra commenced his work immediately after his marriage and spent a lifetime over it. When he had finished, he looked around to find that his young wife was now an old woman, grieving for her lack of children. In appreciation of her sorrow and her undemanding nature which had made it possible for him to write his *oeuvre,* he named it *Bhamati* in her honour, and told her that those who read his work would be their children. The *Bhamati* is still in good condition, although the paper is soft and thin.

Other old paper manuscripts are the *Vamana Purana* (A.D. 1521), Jayatirtha's *Tattrodyotavivarana* (A.D. 1557), the *Kalanirnaya* from Hemadri's *Parisheshakhanda* (A.D. 1575), the *Bhishmaparva* of the *Mahabharata* (Benares, A.D. 1585) and the *Gadaparva* of the same epic (A.D. 1589). The smallest paper manuscripts are the *Durga Shabda Stuti* and the *Bhagavat Gita* (plate 13). An unusual work is the Marathi *Shri Shiva Prapancha,* its letters and ornamentation made up of microscopic letters of the name of Lord Shiva written in tiny letters. Ambar Hussain's Marathi commentary on the *Gita* is among the important paper manuscripts in the Library's collection (plate 14).

A rich collection of the Sarasvati Mahal is that of the Puranic accounts of the religious shrines and villages of the Kaveri Delta. The *Kshetramahatmyas* of the temples of this region are an unique treasure.

Serfoji was a bibliophile, an avid collector of books on all subjects, but particularly medicine. He had 350 medical treatises and several physiognomy charts. The Sarasvati Mahal has a total of 37,164 books.

But he was more than a mere collector. He was a scholar, a keen student of medicine and a patron of scholars, physicians and artists.

Painted Manuscripts

Serfoji II commissioned the writing or re-copying of several manuscripts with colourful illustrations. The illustrations were either restricted to the front and back covers, as in the case of many wordy religious texts, or appeared on each page to illustrate a point, as in many semi-religious and secular texts. Most of the paintings are on paper, with an occasional painting on a wooden cover.

The painted manuscript was derived from a melange of western and central Indian traditions. Manuscript

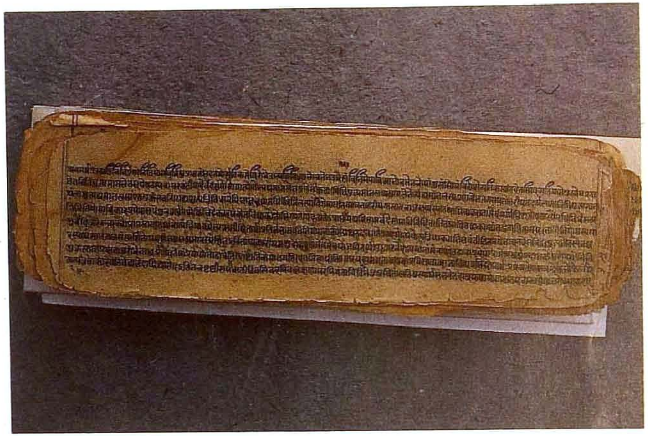


Plate 12: Bhamati, the oldest paper manuscript

Plate 13: Durga Shabda Stuti and Bhagavat Gita, miniature paper manuscripts.

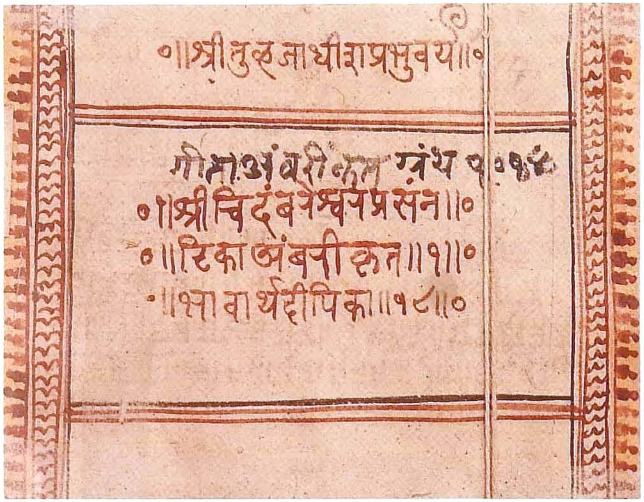


Plate 14: Ambar Hussain's Marathi commentory on the Bhagavat Gita

paintings, on the cover and within, have appeared on Gujarati Jaina palm leaves, Maharashtrian religious texts and Vijayanagara paintings on wood and cloth. These have been catalogued and studied in detail.

There are records of painters. One Sarangapani supplied 80 paintings for Rs. 140, besides receiving a monthly salary of Rs. 3. Serfoji had four pictures of himself, mounted on a horse, painted in 1816. There are several portraits of the Maratha kings recorded for posterity. Venkataperumal and Venkatanarayanappayya are the painters mentioned, besides records of women painters. When Serfoji II went on a pilgrimage to Benares, he took along a painter named Thomas on a monthly salary of 10 *phuli varahans.* There is also reference to the payment of Rs. 200 to Govindaswamy, an artist, for painting a portrait of Shivaji II.

The painted manuscripts may be divided into three sections, religious, semi-religious and secular, for the purpose of study and convenience. The religious paintings involve illustrations from the epics and *puranas,* particularly the latter. The semi-religious include manuscripts on secular subjects, such as the training of horses and elephants, with mythology and religion intermingling freely. The secular paintings include representations of the life of the period, as well as botanical and medical treatises which held Serfoji's interest so greatly.

The religious paintings are the most numerous. The language of most of the painted manuscripts is Marathi, with a considerable number in Sanskrit and a few in Telugu.

RELIGIOUS PAINTINGS

The religion of this period was not unlike our own: the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were most popular, followed by Sanskrit and Tamil puranic lore. The paintings

Plate 15: Atmarama Grantha

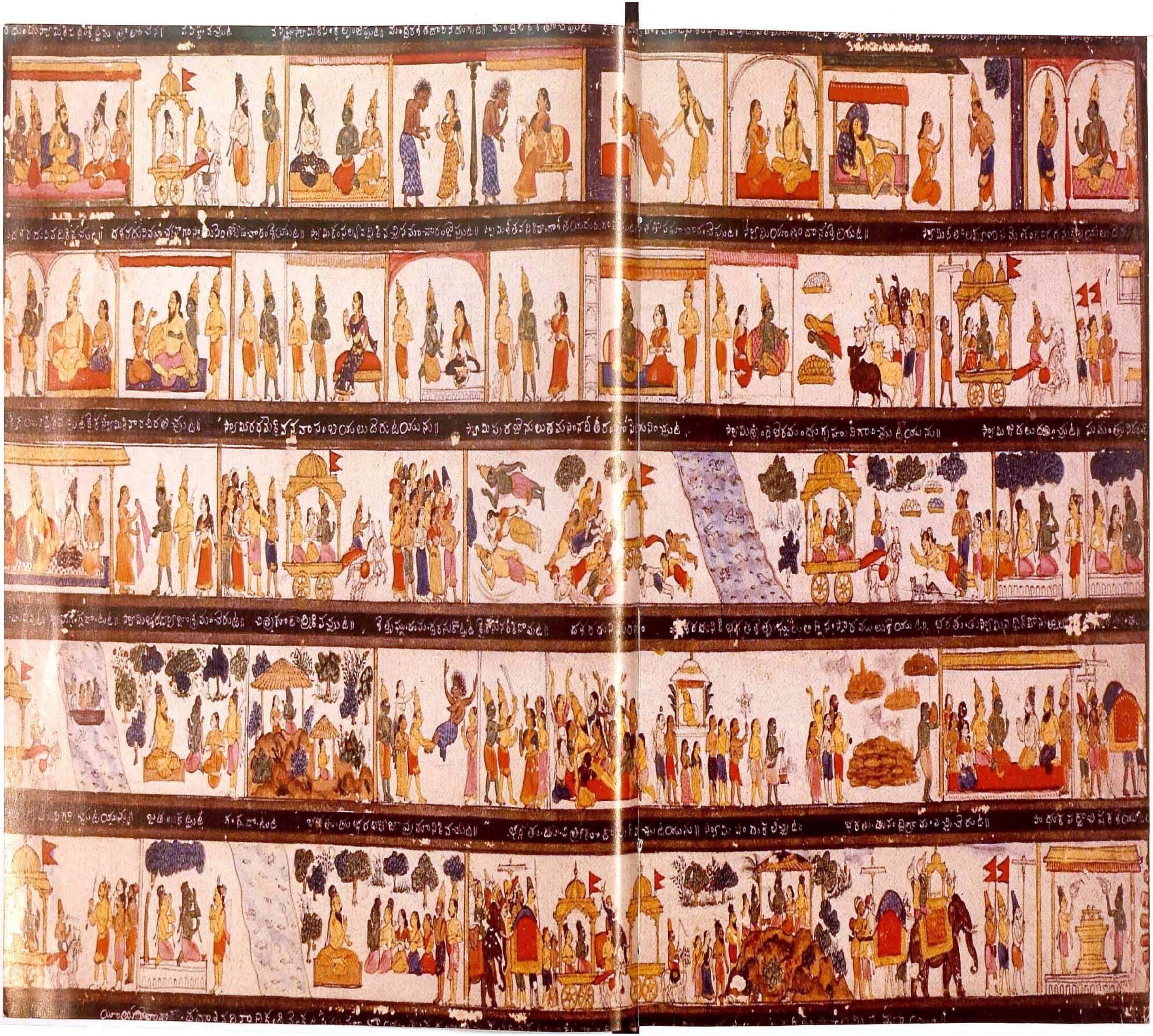


Plate 16: Chitra Ramayana
– Ayodhya Khanda

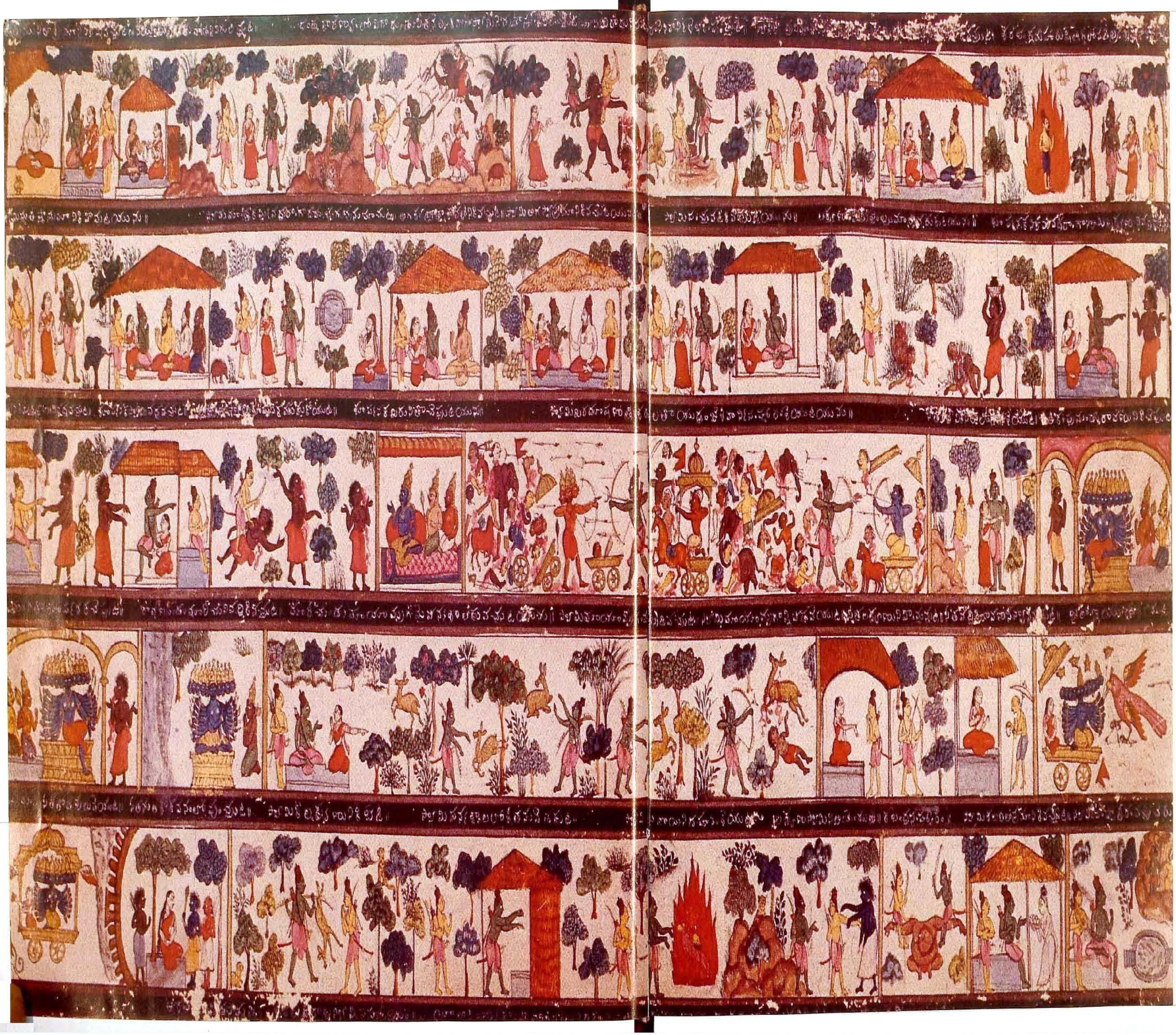


Plate 17: Chitra Ramayana
– Aranya Khanda

generally form the cover of the manuscript, leaving the inner pages free for written matter.

Atmarama Grantha (plate 15)

A very important work belonging to the period of Ekoji I is the *Dasa Bodha* of the *Atmarama Grantha.* It was believed to have been written in the *Ovi* meter in Marathi by Sant Ramdas, who lived from 1608 to 1681 and was the Guru of Chhatrapathi Shivaji, the founder of the Maratha state. Ramdas's teachings were collected in the *Atmarama Grantha* of 1820 A.D. On the title page of the *Grantha* are paintings of Shivaji and Sant Ramdas. Sitting before a pale blue background, the saint is propounding his philosophy, while Shivaji listens with folded hands. The figures are surrounded by dark shading, typical of the Thanjavur school. Sant Ramdas is shown in the loin cloth which he is believed to have worn, with a tiger's hide on his left shoulder and a bolster behind his back. In contrast, Shivaji has neither a seat nor a cushion. There is an elaborate floral border with a smattering of gold. Yet nothing can divert from the austerity of the scene.

Chitra Ramayana (plates 7,16,17)

The *Ramayana* was the most popular epic of this period. The story of Rama, his childhood at Ayodhya, his marriage and subsequent banishment, the abduction of Sita, the war with Ravana and the final triumph of justice and righteousness over evil, has never failed to enthrall people from time immemorial. The Maratha saints of Western and Central India had sung the praises of this *avatara* of Vishnu, and his worship and story formed the subject of both the domestic prayer and the creative outpourings of so many writers. The popularity of the subject is further emphasized by the fact that the *Ramapattabhishekham* (coronation of Lord Rama) is among the most popular subjects of Thanjavur paintings.

An unique quality of miniature painting is preserved in the *Chitra Ramayana,* in the form of three painted sheets, each illustrating an entire *khanda*- the *Bala khanda, Ayodhya khanda* and *Aranya khanda.* It is evident that the artists are from the Nayak court, for the explanations of the paintings are given in Telugu. However, the *Ramayana* itself is written by Madhavaswami, a great scholar and descendent of Sant Ramdas. He belonged to the Ramdasi *math* and lived at Thiruvazhandur near Mayavaram between 1676 and 1713, during the reign of King Shahji. His *guru* was Shri Raghavaswamy of Konur.

Madhavaswami's *Ramayana* has seven *khandas* as in Valmiki's. In Swami Ramdas's tradition, it starts with an obeissance to Ganesha, Saraswathi, Satguru and the reader. It is in narrative form, written in the *Ovi* metre. As in Valmiki's *Ramayana,* it starts with Narada narrating the story of *Ramayana* to Valmiki.

The three khandas are more in the style of Mughal miniatures, with an emphasis on detail and a liberal usage of gold. Each picture has an explanation in Telugu. Most of the faces are in profile, with a rare front-looking face. There is very little embellishment, with an odd tree providing occasional relief from the preponderance of human figures. Animals are highly stylised and the pictures are totally two-dimensional.

The paper on which the illustrations are painted is very old. The three scenes are a brilliant example of miniaturized painting. The fourth incomplete sheet is very educative about the method of drawing used by the artist, starting from a carbon sketch till it reaches the complete colours.

Angadashishtayee (plate 18)

Another important illustration from the *Ramayana* is the *Angadashishtayee.* The manuscript is

authored by Krishnadasamudgala. On the cover of the *Yuddhakhanda*, there is a dynamic picture of the ten-headed Ravana playing the *veena*, with his host of *Rakshashas* behind him. Facing him and lecturing to him is Angada, seated on a throne made of his coiled tail, giving him a few millimetres in height above the lord of Lanka, with a liberal use of gold to indicate the royalty of the characters and the scene. The whole picture, although two dimensional and highly stylised, is dramatic, with the multi-armed and multi-headed Ravana standing out against the understated background.

The simple pillars holding up wide arches also reflect the functional architecture of this period.

Bhavartha Ramayana (plate 19)

Another Marathi *Ramayana* is the *Bhavartha Ramayana* written by Eknath Maharaj. In 1803, a stone printed edition was brought out by Kuppakyabhatta, the Superintendant of the Nava Vidhya Kala Nidhi Yantra Shala, a press set up by Serfoji II. The first *Devanagari* printing press in South India was established in Thanjavur by Serfoji under the influence of his tutor Rev. Schwartz. Serfoji intended to print books for the Sanskirt and Marathi schools he had established in and around Thanjavur. He procured a small hand press and stone Devanagari types from Madras and the first production of the press was a Sanskrit–Marathi almanac *(panchangam)*. The popularity of the press continued till it was taken over by the lithographic presses of Bombay. The first printed edition of the *Raghuvamsha* was done at Thanjavur, as well as the *Maghamula, Kumarasambhava* and *Annapattinam* in *Devanagari* script. But the types used were made of stone.

On the title sheet of the *Bhavartha Ramayana* printed at the Navavidhya Kalanidhi, is a beautiful scene of the *Ramapattabhishekham*, or the coronation of Rama. This manuscript painting bears a striking resemblance to the Thanjavur paintings on wood, although the embellishment is far less. One striking feature of this illustration is the number of faces which either face the front or have a three-quarter view of the face in the style of the Thanjavur paintings on wood, rather than the more frequently used profiles of the Nayak and the Mughal styles of painting which influenced Maratha miniature painting to such a great degree.

Ramamrita Taranga (plate 20)

Madhavasuta, the son of Madhavaswamy, also wrote an eulogy of Rama known as the *Ramamrita Taranga*. He lived from 1730 to 1770 and used the *mudra* (signature) Ramapandita in his works. He wrote about twenty-five *oeuvres*, in keeping with the tradition of his father.

The *Ramamrita Taranga* of Ramapandita has a very decorative painting of Kodandarama on one side, and Ramapandita standing with folded hands on the side of the manuscript, with the name of the work in the centre of the page. This form of miniaturisation, as in the *Atmarama Grantha*, was most popularly used in Marathi manuscripts. Both the *Ramamrita Taranga* and *Bhavartha Ramayana* have ornate arches very unlike those built at this time, but similar to those found on the paintings on wood, or on the temples of this period.

Mahabharata

Madhavaswami of Thiruvazhandur wrote a massive twenty-one *parva Mahabharata* in Marathi. Each *parva* has two exquisitely painted miniatures on the title page. The *Mahabharata* is a fascinating story of fratricide, hatred and jealousy. It has never failed to evoke interest and excitement, but is also rarely written, out of a superstitious belief that narrating the whole story would be followed by troubled times. It is the story of the five Pandava brothers and the hundred Kaurava brothers, the sons of two brothers. Great warriors and powerful women dominate the story. But, at the

Plate 18: Angadashistayee

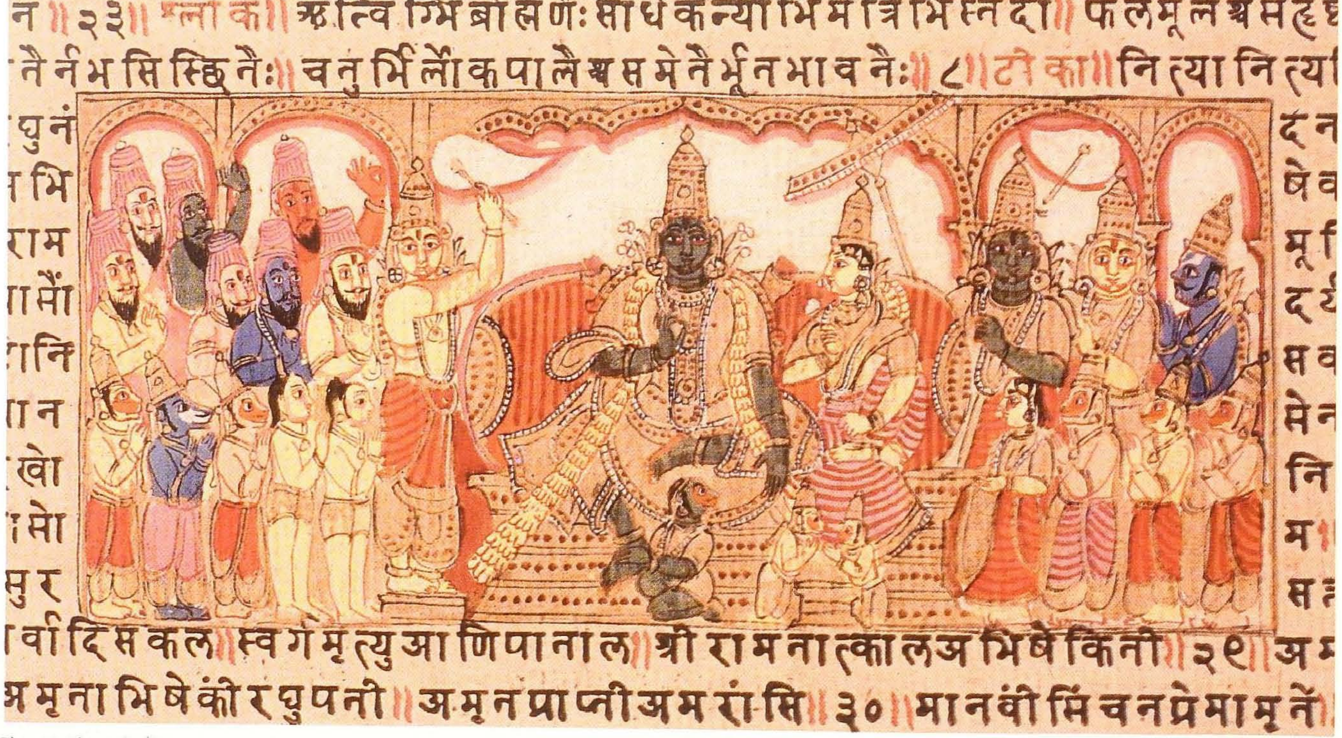


Plate 19: Bhavartha Ramayana

Plate 20: Ramamrita Taranga

apex is Lord Krishna, who is born on earth to weed out evil and establish the rule of truth.

This *Mahabharata,* the manuscript and paintings, was commissioned by Serfoji II for his son-in-law Ramaswami Mohite at the latter's marriage to Serfoji's daughter in Saka 1746 (A.D. 1824).

The miniatures of the Mahabharata are stiff and stylised. Nothing more was possible, given the limited space and the complicated and passionate story. There is no separation between the human and the divine, unlike the other manuscripts. Also, unlike many of the other manuscripts, the description of each illustration is in Marathi.

Adiparva (plate 21)

The first *parva* of the *Mahabharata,* the *Adiparva,* starts with a painting of two evocative scenes. On the left is Kunti holding three children. On the right is the burning house of lac, setting the trend for the coming of the terrible story of the Pandava - Kaurava hatred and the efforts of each to destroy the other. The painting and the title of the texts are surrounded by a very delicate floral border, with strong North Indian influences. The house of lac, built and burnt by the Kauravas, is like a Muslim style pavilion.

Sabhaparva (plate 22)

The title sheet of the *Sabhaparva* has two very important scenes. On the left is a miniature of Krishna with his five Pandava cousins. On the right is the dice game, with Duryodhana mocking the unfortunate Draupadi. However, the stiff figures totally rob the scene of its poignancy and tragedy, and the result is just two court scenes to illustrate the title. Once again, there is a floral border of an aster-like flower in deep burgundy. Although floral borders are common in Mughal and Rajput paintings, this has a distinct European style.

There is no difference in the depiction of the divine and the human. Krishna is distinguished by his colour alone.

Virataparva (plate 23)

The cover of the *Virataparva* has scenes of Bhima killing Kichaka on one side and the wedding of Abhimanyu and Uttara on the other. The killing of Kichaka is a little more animated than many of the other paintings, being gory and quite blood-thirsty. The floral border of this painting consists of very heavily stylised flowers, again very European in appearance. In fact the border tends to dominate the illustration.

Bhishmaparva (plate 24)

The cover of the *Bhishmaparva* has a painting of Krishna as *Chakradhari* wielding the mighty *chakra* in anger, to hurl it at the invincible Bhishmapitamah. On the other side of the title is a painting of Bhishma with folded hands and bent head for, as he said, 'what greater blessing can a man have than death at the hands of the Lord?' Eventually, Krishna is reminded of his vow not to actively participate in the war and does not use the *chakra.*

The emotive quality of the scene is beautifully recorded by the artist, in spite of the expressionless faces. Krishna is powerful and grand, Bhishma humble. However, the floral border around the scene again denotes western influence, unlike the delicate details of the paintings and detracts from the poignancy of the scene.

Karnaparva (plate 25)

The *Karnaparva* has a very active scene of Karna and Arjuna facing each other at war. The two are shooting arrows and the scene is terrible, with death

Plate 21: Mahabarata – Adiparva

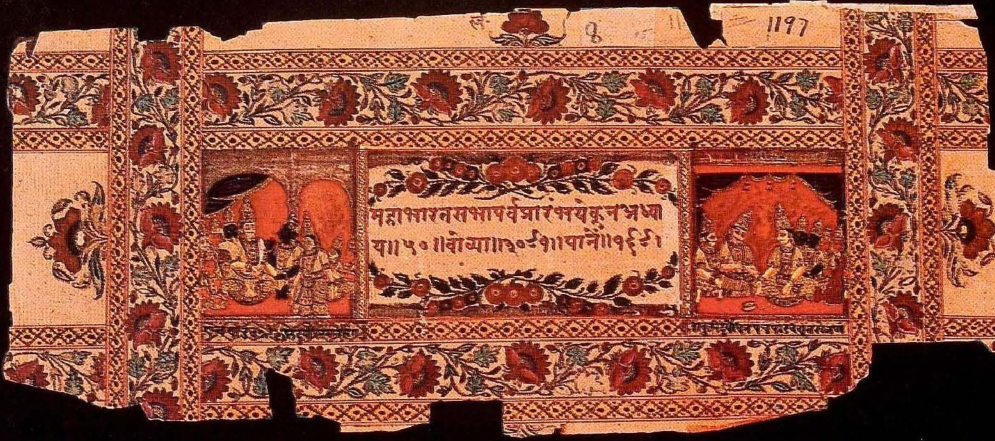


Plate 22: Mahabharata – Sabhaparva

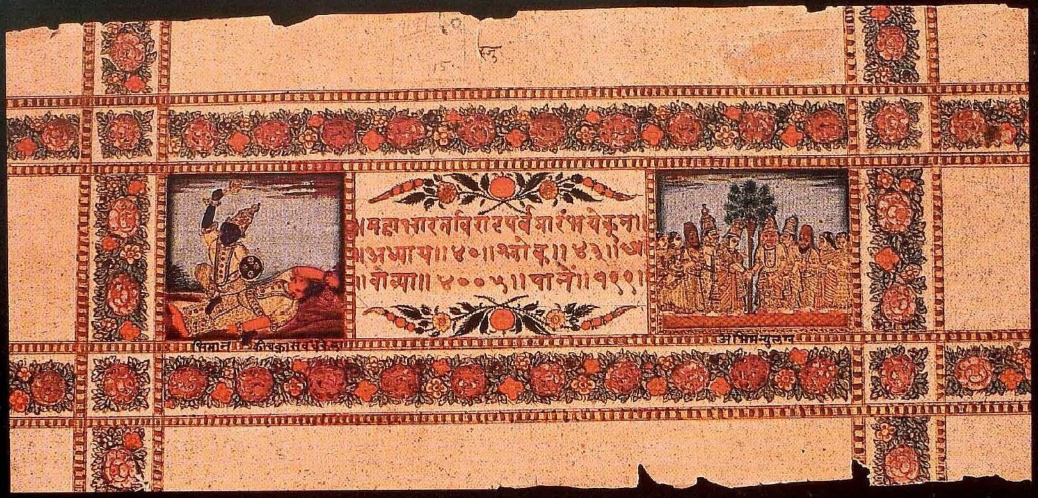


Plate 23: Mahabharata – Virataparva

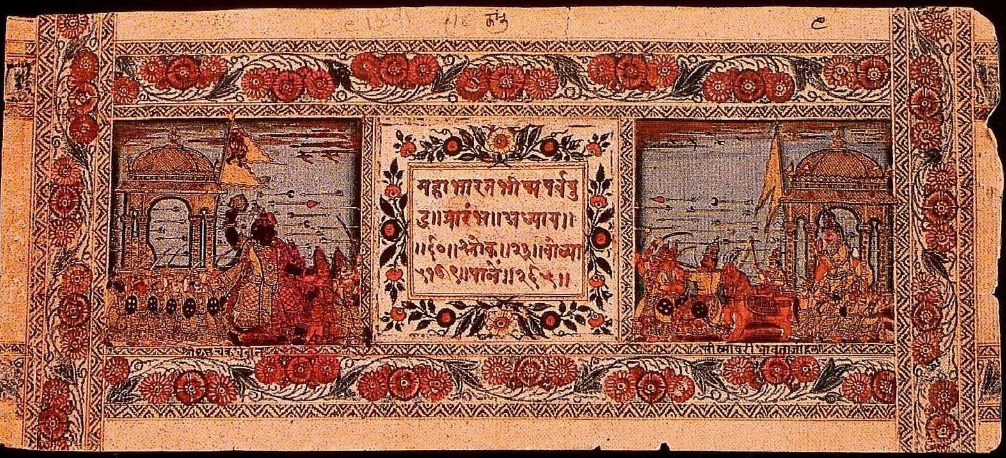


Plate 24: Mahabharata – Bhishmaparva

unavoidable. The darting arrows are flying around. The delicate, though stylised border does not detract from the horrors of war, depicted by the flying arrows.

Aishikaparva (plate 26)

The cover manuscript of the *Aishikaparva* contains two scenes portraying the brutality of the *Mahabharata* war. On one side, the child in Uttara's womb is safeguarded by a blessing of the Lord. On the other side is a portrayal of Bhima chopping off Ashwatthama's head, in the usual gory style of such scenes. This story is in variance with the original *Mahabharata*. The border of pink lotuses is quite inappropriate to the scene.

Streeparva (plate 27)

The cover page of the *Streeparva* depicts the tragedy of the *Mahabharata.* On one side is Kunti crying at the battlefield for all the dead warriors, including her son and grand sons. On the other side is Dhritarashtra hugging the iron statue of Bhima, which goes up in flames at his uncle's angry touch. The artist has emphasized the result of deeds of evil rather than the deeds themselves. The border of these miniatures consists of alternating burgundy and blue flowers.

Vishokaparva (plate 28)

The *Vishokaparva* has two scenes of Dhritarashtra. On one side Vidura is trying to teach him Vedantic philosophy, unsuccessfully as it turned out from our knowledge of the epic. On the other side Vyasa pacifies *(samaḍhana)* the hapless Dhritarashtra, telling him to rid himself of his jealousies and doubts.

In both the painting and the chapter, Madhavaswami used the opportunity to propound the philosophy of *Advaita* in which the Marathi rulers had great faith.

Plate 25: Mahabharata – Karnaparva

Plate 26: Mahabharata - Aishikaparva

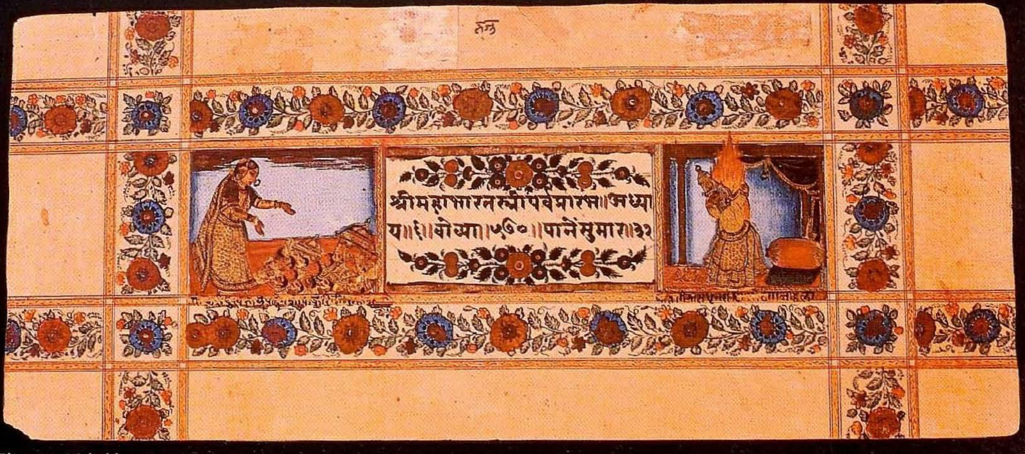


Plate 27: Mahabharata – Streeparva

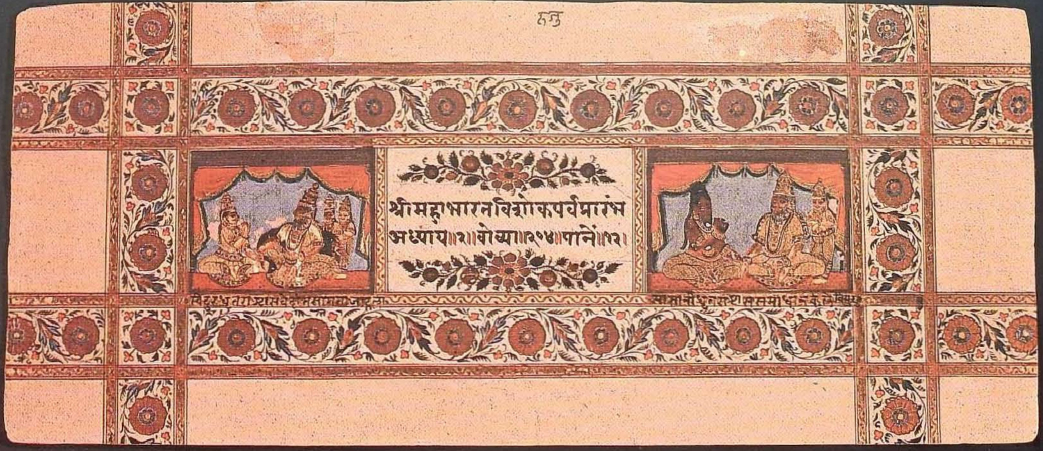


Plate 28: Mahabharata – Vishokaparva

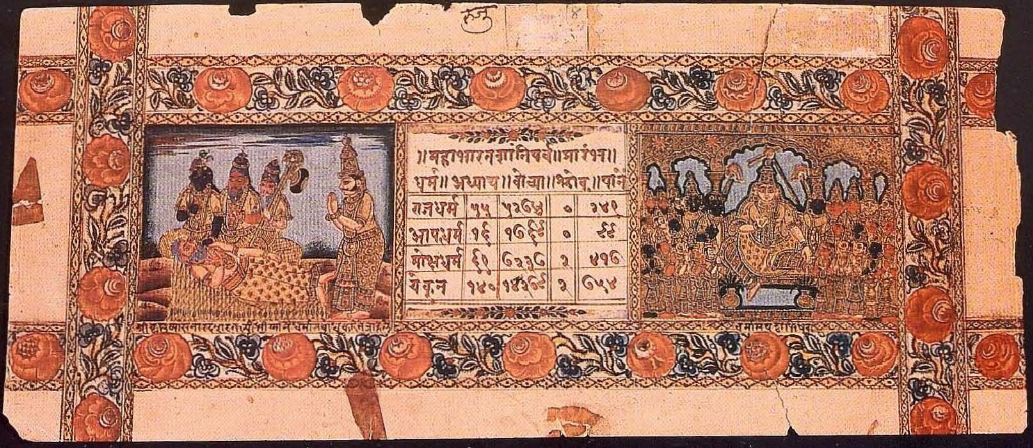


Plate 29: Mahabharata – Shantiparva

Plate 30: Mahabharata – Anushasanaparva

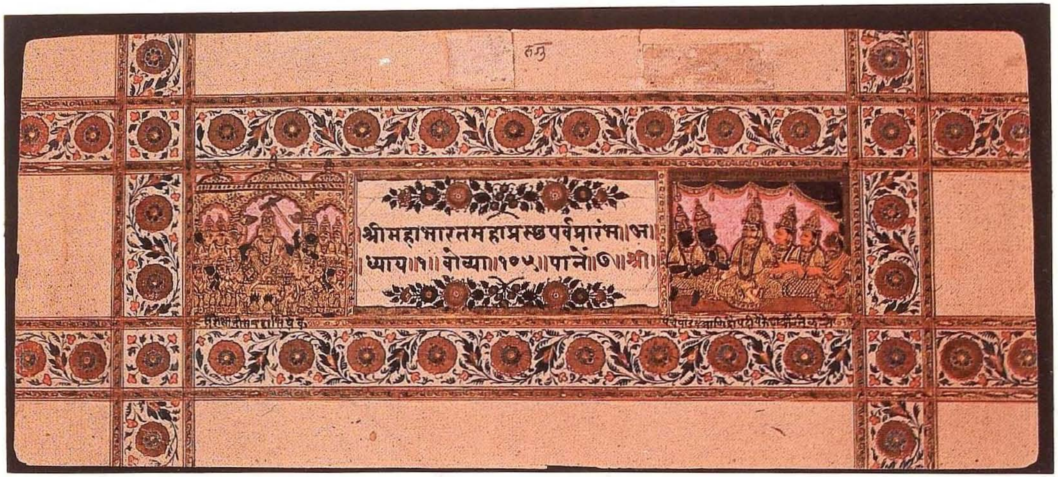


Plate 31: Mahabharata – Mahapraschaparva

Shantiparva (plate 29)

The title page of the *Shantiparva* has two very important scenes from the *Mahabharata*. On the left lies Bhishma on his bed of arrows, flanked by Krishna, Vyasa and Narada. On the right is the coronation of Yudhishthira or Dharmaraja, at the court of Hastinapura. Complementing some of the bright red faces in the court scene are bright red floral buds on the border.

Anushasanaparva (plate 30)

The *Anushasanaparva* has one scene apparently unconnected with the main story on its cover page. On the left side is Garuda with the *amritakalasha*. This is the story of an earlier *avatara* of Vishnu. On the right, Bhishma hands over the Panchapandavas to the care of Krishna. The border of this cover consists of a leafy creeper.

Mahapraschaparva (plate 31)

The cover page of the *Mahapraschaparva* portrays the scene of Parikshita's coronation, as well as a scene of the Panchapandavas and Draupadi. Yudhishthira, son of Dharma, is in this scene. To his left are his brothers Nakula and Sahadeva with red faces, and to his right are Bhima and Arjuna with dark blue faces. It is interesting that these same five colours are used throughout the *Mahabharata* paintings to depict the Pandava brothers. The border of these paintings consists of dark maroon buds on a dark blue creeper, interspersed with tiny red flowers.

Shri Bhagavat Uttaradha (plate 32)

The marriage of Krishna and Rukmini on one side, and the two seated on a chariot on the other, flank the title on the first page of this manuscript.

It is interesting to note that the various manuscripts relating to the Krishna *Avatara* are illustrated in a similar format, the title is in the centre of the page, flanked on either side by paintings illustrative of the text.

Vedantasurya (plate 33)

Written in Marathi by Shridharaswami in 1704, this is a treatise on the *Advaita* philosophy which was so popular among the Maratha rulers. The cover page of the manuscript depicts the author and his Lord Panduranga.

Although the *Advaita* school of philosophy is as ancient as Indian civilization, it gained popularity in the Maratha period. The rulers patronised *Advaita acharyas.* Their family *guru,* Sant Ramdas, had set up several *Advaita maths* whose pontiffs were the royal teachers and philosophers.

Shri Bhagavat Gita (plate 34)

This is a very interesting manuscript with the *Gitopadesham* scene on the cover. Arjuna is seated in his chariot. In contrast to him is a very young, child-like Krishna holding the reins of four horses and turning behind to speak to Arjuna. His right hand is raised to describe a point.

Krishna has a knot on the top of his head and the traditional head jewellery of the Balakrishnamurtis, so popular in the Thanjavur paintings on wood of the same period. Even in the paintings on wood, Krishna is generally seen as a child, although he is flanked by his two wives Rukmini and Satyabhama. Perhaps this is an illustration of the belief in the eternal youth of the Lord, in contrast to the ageing process of all mortals. It is obvious that such a belief was current at that time, in that two totally different situations, depicted so differently, have a common perception of Lord Krishna.

Siddhasanketa (plate 35)

The *Siddhasanketa,* a Marathi work ascribed to Mrityunjaya, has a picture of Mrityunjaya Badshah listening

Plate 32: Shri Bhagavat Uttaradha

Plate 33: Vedantasurya

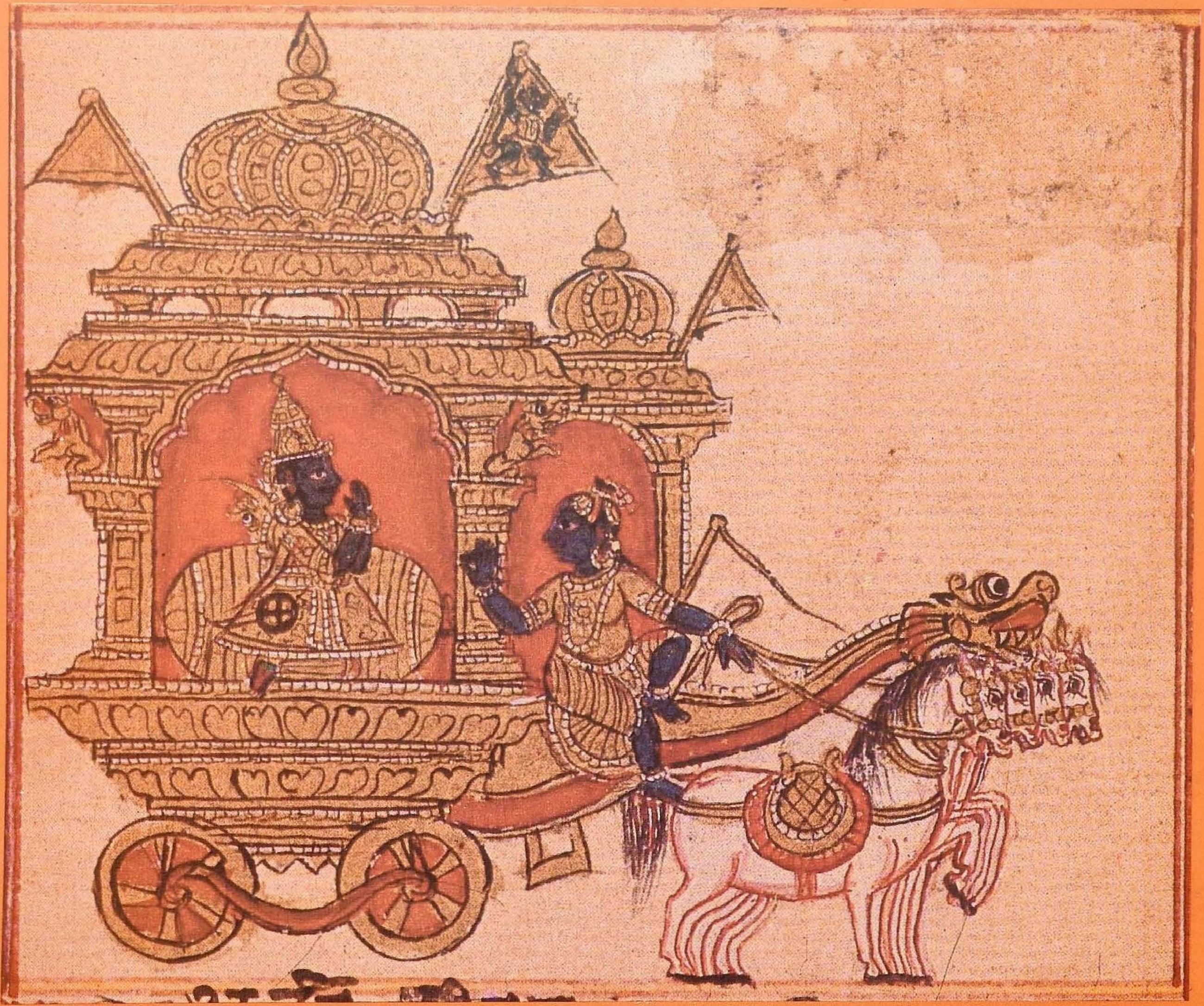


Plate 34: Shri Bhaĝavat Gita

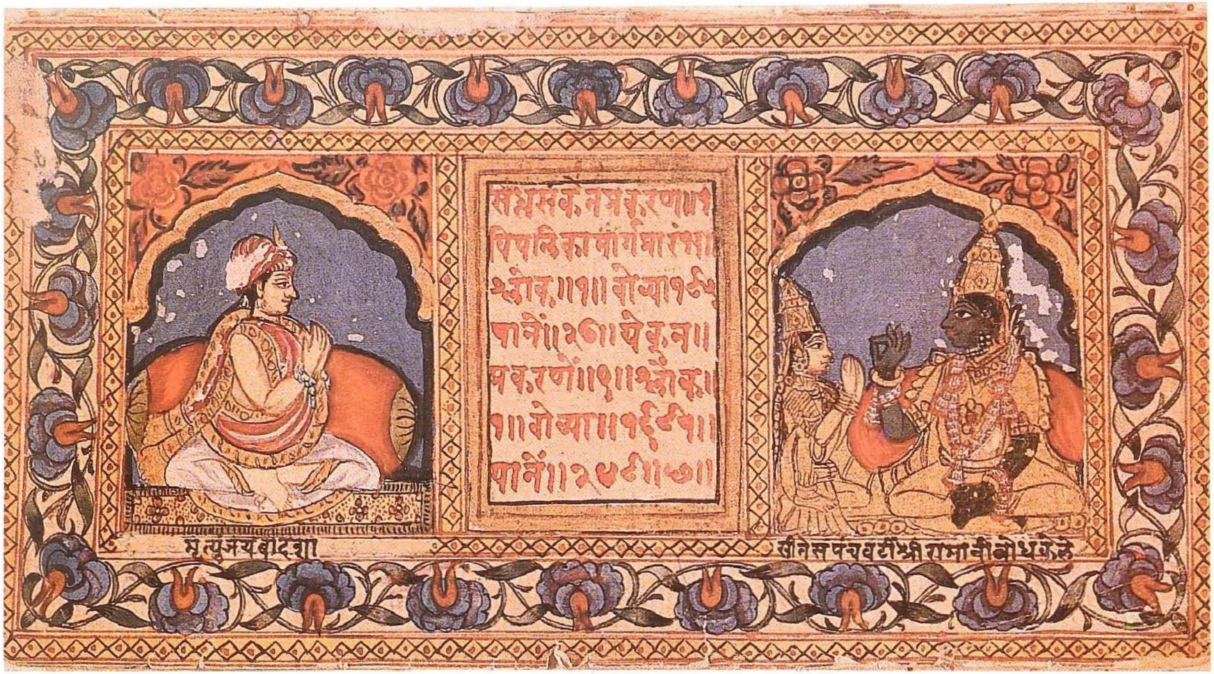


Plate 35: Siddhasanketa

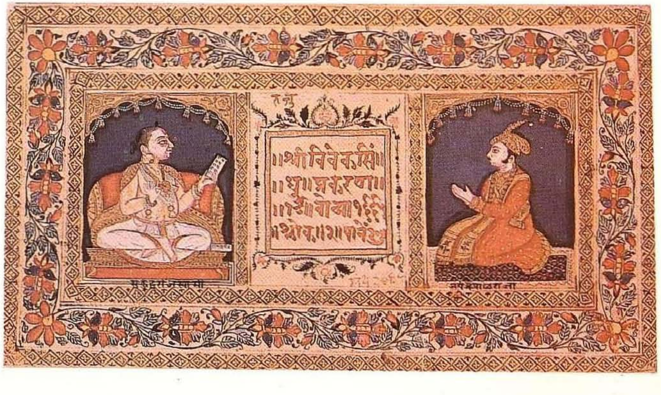


Plate 36: Vivekasindhu

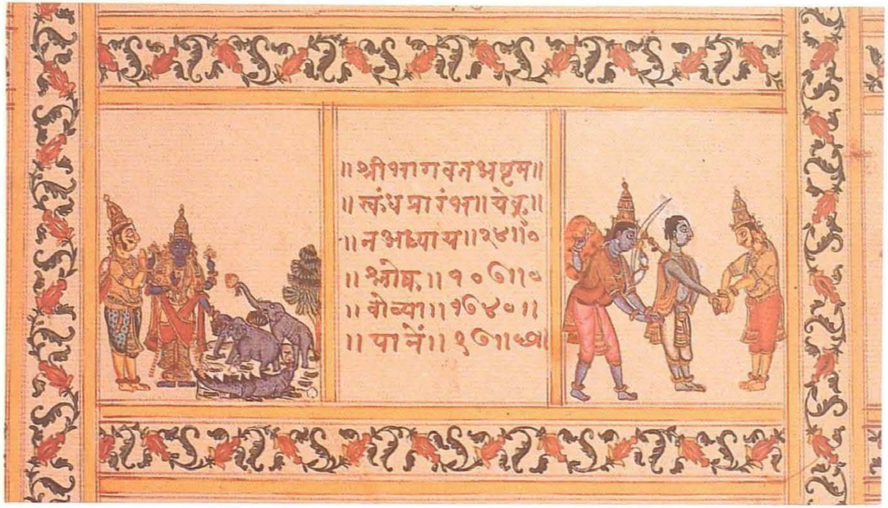


Plate 37: Bhagavata – Saptamaskandha

Plate 38: Bhagavata – Ashtamaskandha

with folded hands as Rama propounds the philosophy of the *Vedanta* to Sita. The *Siddhasanketa* describes the several *margas* of *Vedanta*, such as *Pipeelika, Vihangama, Markata, Manushya, Prapanchanirasana, Bhedakhandana, Matankaramshaniroopana, Prarabdhabhogasangrahani* and *Ubhayasamadhiguru-charanaravinda Bhakti Poojana.* Once again, this reinforces the Advaita philosophy of the Maratha rulers.

Vivekasindhu (plate 36)

The *Vivekasindhu,* written in the 11-12th centuries by Mukundaraja (believed to be the first writer in Marathi), is also a Vedantic treatise whose cover shows Mukundaraja Swamy and Jayantipalaraja, the son of King Ballal of Narasimha.

If Mrityunjaya propounded nine *margas* of Vedanta, Mukundaraja propounded eighteen: *Svaroopasamavesha, Khanubhavadyardakarna, Tattvasrushtikathana, Ishvaratanutraya, Tanpadadehalingadehe, Sthooladehavampranava, Prakritipurusha, Sthooladehasakshi, Sookshmadehasakshi, Karanadehasakshi, Mahakaranadeha, Panchapralaya, Maya Anivarchaneeya, Jeevaparamatmayaikya, Bhedakhandana, Maha Advaitapratipadana, Sachchidanandavivarana, Sadguruparamparani.*

Bhagavata - Saptamaskandha (plate 37)

Among the other important Marathi manuscripts is the *Saptamaskanda* of the *Bhagavata* written by Gangadhara, son of Upmangada, who lived during the reign of Shahji. On one side of the cover is a scene of *Tattvopadesha,* with the teacher instructing his students. The importance of *Vedanta* is emphasized periodically in Maratha painting. On the other side is the scene of *Narasimhavatara,* the Lord in the form of a man-lion tearing open the body of the evil Hiranyakashipu, even as another tries to attack him.

Bhagavata - Ashtamaskandha (plate 38)

Another scene from the *Bhagavata* is the *Ashtamaskanda* written by Ambajipandita and Vasudevapandita, grandsons of Madhavaswami through his daughter. On one side is an illustration of the story of *Gajendramoksha,* the liberation by Vishnu of the elephant from the clutches of the wicked crocodile. On the other side is a scene of *Vamanavatara,* depicting the ever-charitable King Bali acceding to the demand of Vamana, the dwarf incarnation of Lord Vishnu, for space to place his foot.

Rigveda Paintings

Among the Sanskrit manuscripts is a paper manuscript of the *Rigveda Samhita,* consisting of 311 sheets, of which 85 are colourfully painted with miniatures. Unlike the other paintings which have dulled with time, the *Rig Veda* paintings appear bright and fresh. Some manuscripts have unfinished pencil sketches, while the last pages are embellished with floral decorations. Although the subject of the texts is the *Rig Veda,* the illustrations are made up of scenes from the *Shivapurana.*

Ganesha, Uma Maheshwara and Kartikeya (plate 39)

The title page of the *Rig Veda* is beautifully illustrated with the three deities: Ganesha, Uma Maheshwara and Kartikeya. Ganesha is on an enormous rat, Uma Maheshwara on Nandi and Kartikeya on the peacock.

Ganesha, painted in red, is seated on the *mushika* (mouse) *vahana.* It is interesting that this Ganesha has an elongated face as in the Maharashtrian tradition, rather than the round face of the South Indian Ganesha. All the deities are flanked by *chauri bearers.*

The portrayal of the animal *vahanas* on which the deities sit is quite unusual. The mouse and the

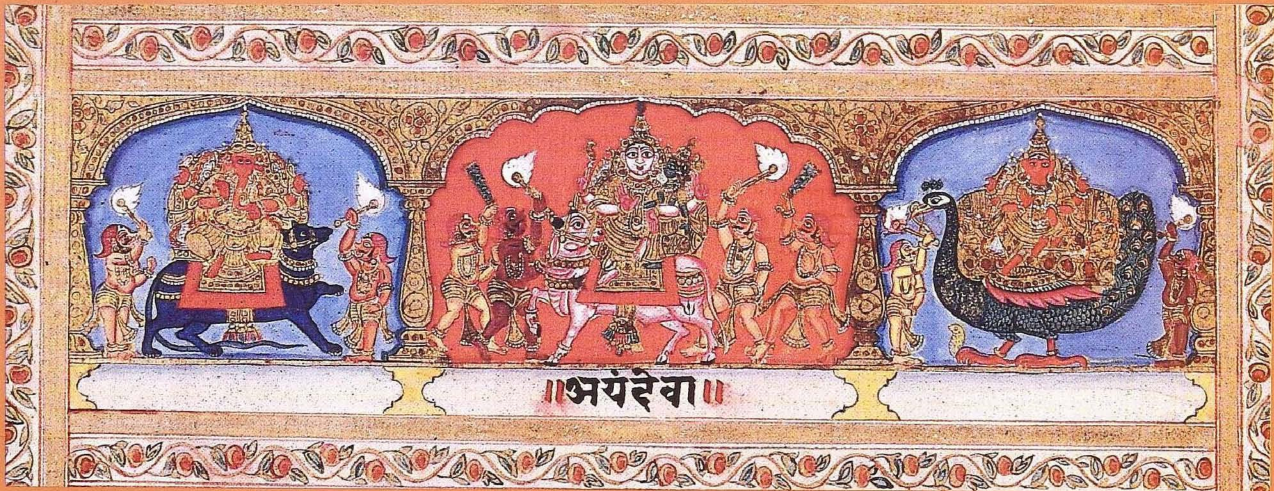


Plate 39: Rigveda Manuscript – Ganesha, Uma Maheshwara and Kartikeya

Plate 40: Rigveda Manuscript – Shiva Tandava

peacock are elongated, to seat their corpulent lords. Nandi, the bull of Shiva, is quite trim, in contrast, and carries both Shiva and Parvati on his back.

Shiva tandava (plate 40 and front cover)

This manuscript depicts Shiva dancing in Pradosha. Shiva's left foot is raised perpendicular to the ground to the level of his eye, while Shakti stands to his left. To his right, the four-faced Brahma keeps the beat *(tala)*, while Saraswati plays the *veena*. Nandi, Patanjali and Kartikeya stand with folded hands while Vishnu plays the *mridanga*, Lakshmi, the *tambura*, and Krishna, the flute. The *Shivabhaktas*, Vyaghrapada and the three-legged Bringi look on with folded hands, as does Ganesha. The scene is very exquisitely executed, with eleborate attention given to very minor details. The startling red forms a beautiful background to the multitude of figures richly embellished with gold. A formalised border - appearing stenciled in its perfection - frames the whole scene enchantingly.

Thiruvilayadal

A series of paintings from the *Thiruvilaiyadalpuranam* depict the story of *Halasia Mahatmiyam*, the origin of the Meenakshi temple. A merchant named Dhananjayan dreams that Kadambavana Nathar or Shiva is worshipped by the *Devas*. He describes the dream to king Kulasekharapandian who proceeds with his retinue to Kadambavanam. On the way, he meets a *Siddhar* who asks the king to build a temple and a town. Thus is born Madurai, around the temple of Meenakshi and Sundareshwarar.

Kulasekhara's son, Malayadhvajapandyan does a *yagam* from which appears a three-nippled girl named Thadadakai. A voice from heaven tells the sorrowing parents that the third nipple will disappear when the girl meets her husband. Thadadakai becomes the queen of Madurai and wins all the seven *ashtadikpalakas* in war. But the eighth *dikpalaka*, Shiva, wins her. So, she marries Lord Shiva who has been born as a very handsome man called Sundarapandyan, and rules Madurai along with his wife. The wedding of Sundarapandyan and Meenakshi is a marvellous affair, attended by the gods, with Brahma acting as priest, in the presence of Agni, the Lord of Fire. The divine saints Patanjali and Vyaghrapada request Shiva to dance and Shiva does his great *tandava* in the Kadambavana temple.

Gundodhara's feast (plate 41)

The guests are feasting at the wedding. But Thadadakai is angry that Shiva's *mupathu mukkodi ganas* have not come, and that the food is being wasted. To pacify her, Shiva sends one of his *ganas*, Gundodhara, whose stomach consists of the *Padavahini* fire. He is ordered to eat the food, which is stored like a mountain. Gundodhara eats all the food in front of him. The painting shows the big mound of food before Gundodhara, flanked by *rishis* and other wedding guests eating their food, while Sundarapandyan and the green-coloured Meenakshi are in conversation on the other side.

Gundodhara's thirst is quenched (plate 42)

Gundodhara has eaten all the food given to him and is thirsty. So, Shiva unlocks Ganga from his hair and the river gushes out. Gundodhara drinks all the water without wasting it. The river is painted with fish, crabs, snakes and water creatures swimming within, coming towards the barren land where Gundodhara awaits the Ganga with an open mouth.

Birth of Ugrapandiyan (plate 43)

The story goes on about Thadadakai's mother who wished to bathe in the holy river. So Shiva drained all the seven seas into the Madurai *potramarai* tank in front of the Meenakshi Sundareshwara temple, making a bath

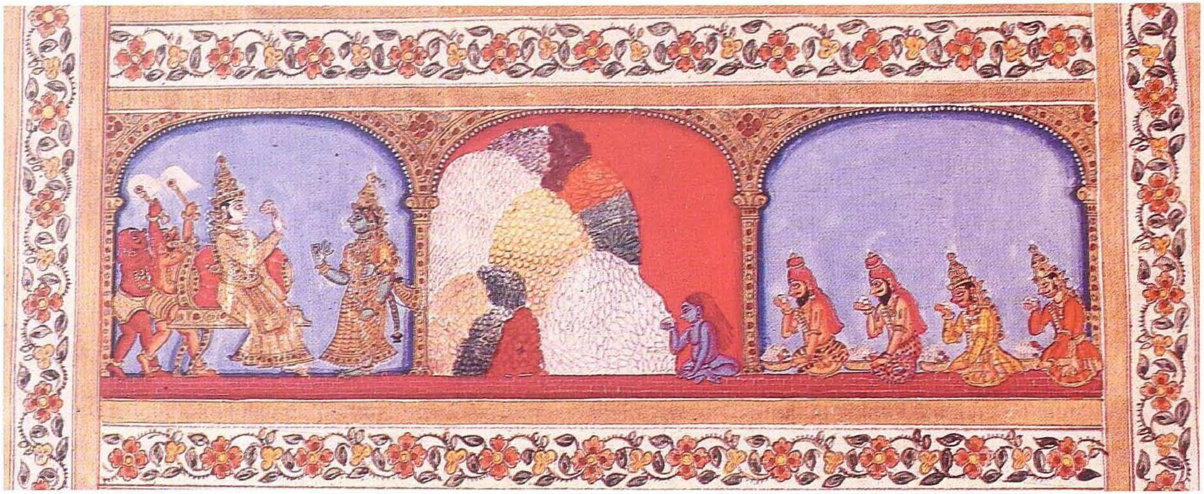


Plate 41: Rigveda Manuscript – Gundodhara's feast

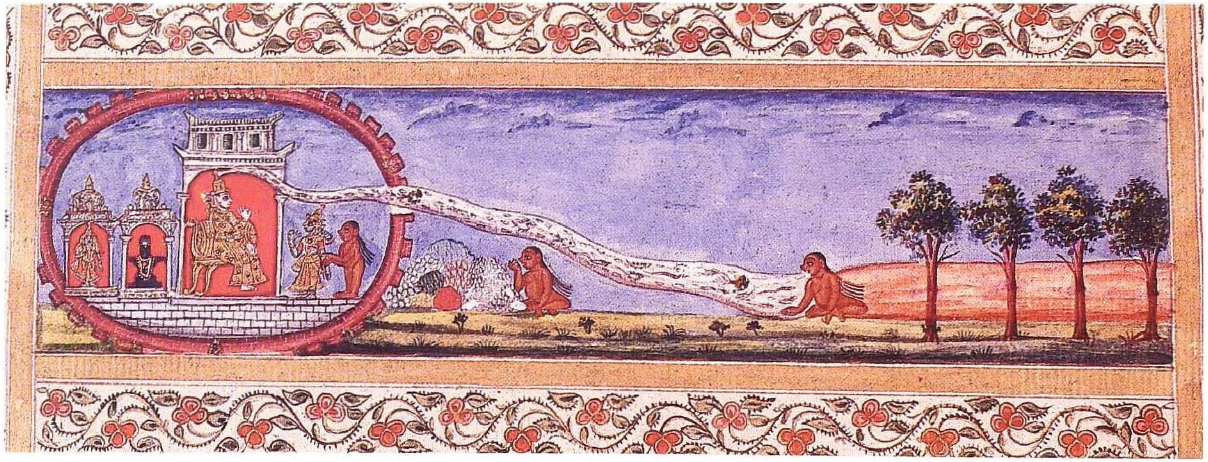


Plate 42: Rigveda Manuscript – Gundodhara's thirst is quenched

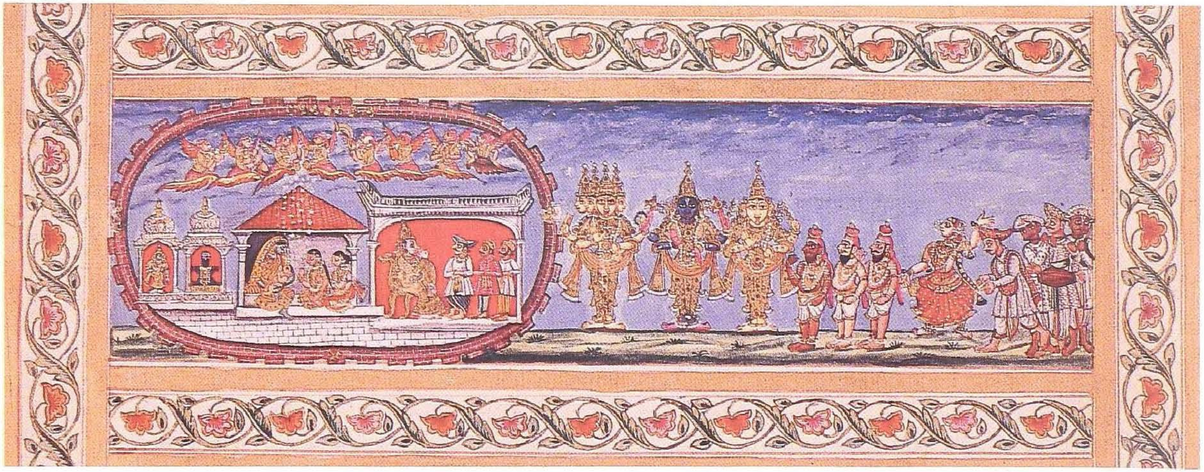


Plate 43: Rigveda Manuscript – Birth of Ugrapandiyan

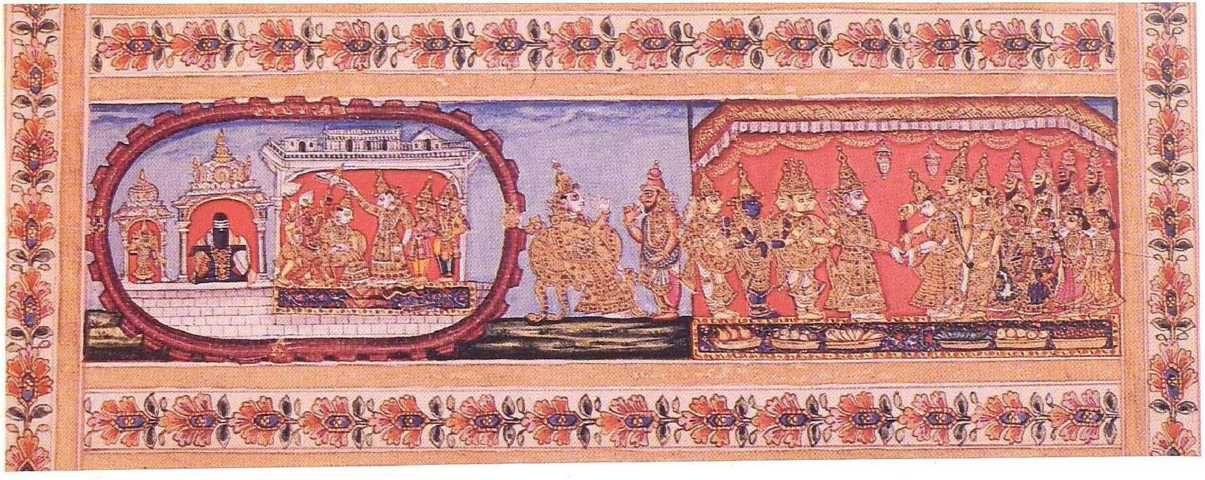


Plate 44: Rigveda Manuscript – Marriage of Ugrapandiyan

in the tank equal to a bath in the seven seas. Thadadakai gives birth to a son who is named Ugrapandiyan.

In this painting, Brahma, Vishnu, Indra and several others come to bless the child. Flying Gandharvas shower flowers, as Sundarapandiyan sits in court. This is a very interesting painting where Meenakshi is depicted with her saree over her head, quite unlike the other paintings where her head is uncovered. Covering the head was alien to both Tamil and Telugu culture, but there are paintings of Marathi women with their heads covered, and this probably influenced this depiction of Meenakshi. The scene of the birth of Ugrapandiyan also has a very exquisite dancing girl accompanied by musicians dressed in Marathi costumes, particularly the Peshwa hat and turbans. However, in spite of the very strong Maratha influence, the dancer is obviously of the South Indian tradition, because the accompaniments include the *mridanga* and small cymbals used in *Bharata Natyam*.

Marriage of Ugrapandiyan (plate 44)

The story goes on that Ugrapandiyan married a Suryakula king's daughter named Kantimati. After the marriage, Ugrapandiyan is crowned king of Madurai, on which day his father, Sundarapandiyan, gives him a bangle and a bunch of flowers to safeguard him.

Ugrapandiyan becomes famous and is considered equal to Indra, who becomes angry and attacks Madurai. Ugrapandiyan has a dream, whereby he is told to attack Varuna. Thus Ugrapandiyan saves the land from the wrath of water. Meanwhile, the lands of the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas suffer from famine. The three kings meet Agastya who tells them to fast every Monday and to pray to Shiva. He gives them the power to fly, and they meet Indra who promises them the water they require. However, Indra refuses to give Ugrapandiyan rain and the two fight each other. Ugrapandiyan has a son, Veerapandiyan, but Ugrapandiyan is still unhappy

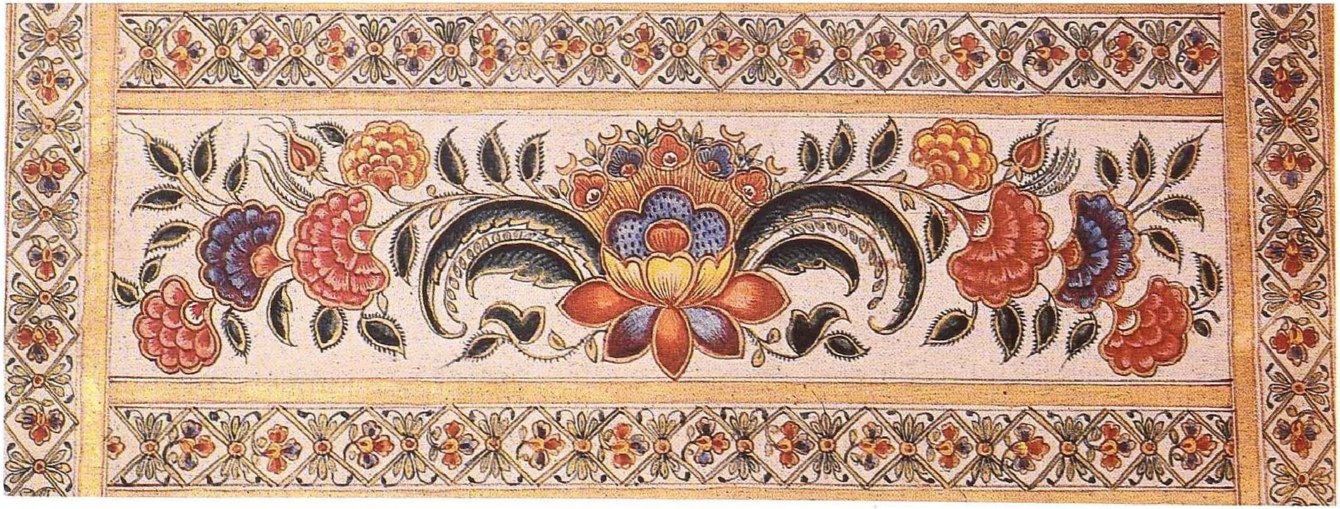


Plate 45: Decorative art on the last page of the Rigveda Manuscript

because of the famine in his land. One night, a saint appears in Ugrapandiyan's dream and advises him to attack Mount Meru with the bunch of flowers which was given to him by his father. Ugrapandiyan does so, and discovers great treasures at the bottom of the mountain. Veerapandiyan is crowned king and Ugrapandiyan is united with his father, Kadambavaneshvara.

The *Thiruvilaiyadalpuranam* is narrated in the *Rig Veda* manuscripts through the many beautiful paintings. These are very important contributions to contemporary perceptions of Shaivite lore.

Decorative art (plate 45)

The last page of each manuscript of the *Rig Veda* is decorated with floral designs, in contrast to the narrative paintings on the cover. As in the *Mahabharata* borders, there is a melange of Moghul decorative art combined with western floral designs and the bright colours of the sunny south.

Dancing girl (plate 46)

This is a close-up of plate 43. The dancer's dress and jewellery are not unlike those of a contemporary Bharata Natyam dancer. However, the turbaned *nattuvanar* is dressed like a Maratha courtier, rather than a traditional South Indian teacher of dance.

Plate 46: Dancing girl

SEMI-RELIGIOUS PAINTINGS

The semi-religious manuscripts include a vast number where fact is mixed with fiction. Humdrum, day-to-day activities are combined with the supernatural, to produce an allegory or to give an explanation for some of the anomalies of this world. Included among these are several almanacs which use the divine for purely material

considerations, to praise a rich provider or to interpret dreams and supernatural events.

Ashva Shastra

The Sanskrit manuscript *Ashva Shastra* is attributed to the Pandava prince Nakula who was believed to be a great authority on horses. It includes the science of horses, as expounded by Salihotra, Shushruta, Garga, Surya and other classical writers. Their knowledge and teachings are collected in this illustrated manuscript available at the Sarasvati Mahal Library.

The *Ashva Shastra* is the result of a considerable amount of research done during the reign of Shahji. Thiruvarur in Thanjavur district was an important centre for training horses and elephants. The *Shastra* is an illustrated book, with pictures of a variety of horses. The shades of colours used in painting these horses are very important, since the colour is supposed to decide the animal's disposition and use. The eight chief characteristics of the horses described by the *Ashva Shastra* cover the shape of the body, its nature, disposition, colour, motion, voice, smell, brilliance and the quality of its hair. Fifty four breeds of horses from all over the world are described in this manuscript, which also gives hints on how to ascertain the age from the hooves, hair, teeth, lip movement, neigh, and so on. The book describes horses as being sensitive to the wishes, aspirations and the situation of the rider and as possessing an uncanny perception, so essential in war. They combine both the physical and psychological qualities essential on the battlefield.

Ganesha (plate 47)

Like all works belonging to this period, the *Ashva Shastra* also commences with a painting of Ganesha. Here Ganesha is seated on a throne or *asana,* with Shakti on his left lap. This *Ganesha* is very Maratha in appearance, with

Plate 47: Ashva Shastra – Ganesha

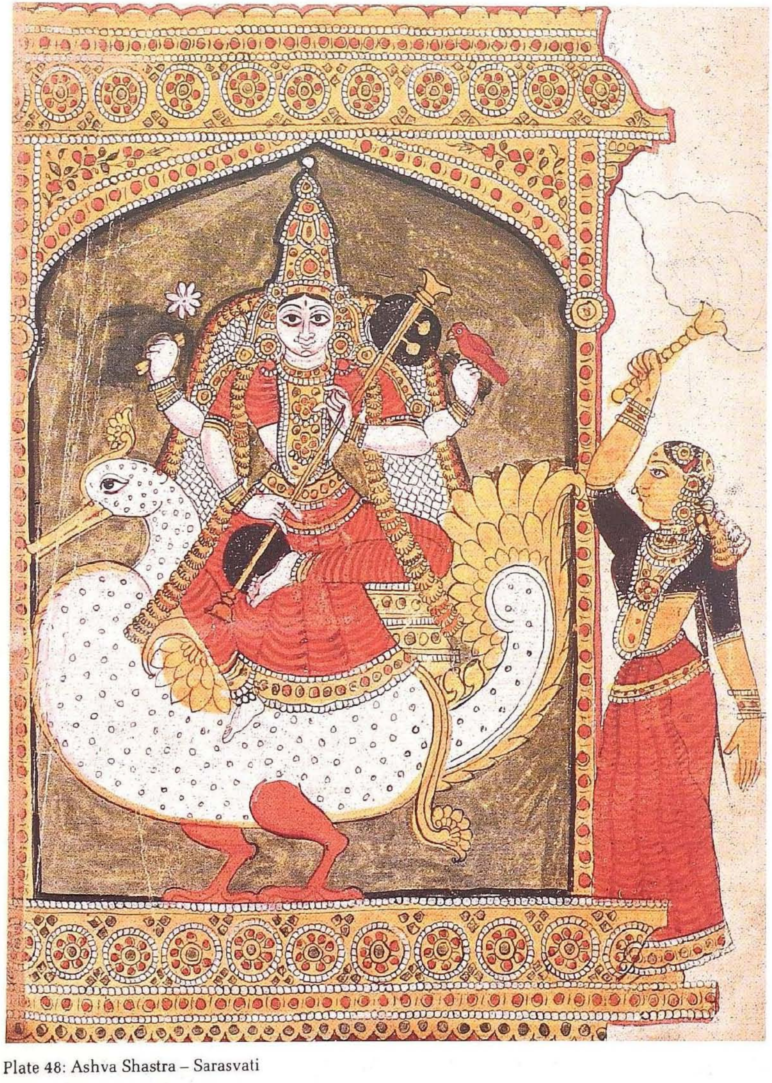


Plate 48: Ashva Shastra – Sarasvati

the elongated face coming down from a broad forehead and small upturned eyes, unlike the South Indian Ganeshas who have round and prominent faces atop plump bodies. However, the ornamentation is very South Indian, in the Vijayanagara style.

Sarasvati (plate 48)

The next sheet of the manuscript contains a beautiful painting of Sarasvati on a swan, flanked by *chauri* bearers. Sarasvati sits on an exquisite gold and gem-encrusted *mandapa* which is very similar to the gold leaf and gem-encrusted wood work of Thanjavur, which is still done over *mandapams, deepams, kalashas,* and plates. Behind her is an uneven, green background. The artist has given a dark outline to the figure of the goddess, an unsuccessful attempt to suggest depth. However, the painting itself is beautiful and is typical of the art of this period.

Manmatha and Rati (plate 49 a & b)

Towards the end of the manuscript, on page 275, are two beautiful paintings of Manmatha, the God of Love, on an elephant made up of many women, shooting an arrow, Cupid's dart, at Rati, who also shoots her arrow from a bow made of sugarcane while kneeling on a horse made up of women. The females who make up the elephant are rigid, although there is one *mridangam* player and another holding a string instrument, suggesting the dance, whereas the woman who make up the horse are supple in movement.

The steeds of the gods (plate 50)

On page 140 of the manuscript are nine horses, the colour of each indicating its use by different *Devas.* The pure white horse is the steed of the moon, Indra's horse is of gold, black for Yama, grey for Vishnu, green for Surya, red for Agni, black for Varuna and *neelotpala* (a shade of blue) for Kubera. However, although the description suggests exotic shades for horses such as green and blue, the artist has been a little cautious from his own perceptions, and has toned down the colours to shades of grey and brown.

The perfect horse (plate 51)

On page 154 of the manuscript is the perfect horse, with instructions on the art of judging its age. For a horse to be *chiranjeevi* (long lived) like the river, says the *Shastra,* it must have long eyes, a long and loud voice, small ears, a white chest and a plump, smooth body. Most important is , of course, a good nature.

Gaja Shastra

The *Gaja Shastra* describes the science of catching and training elephants, freely interspersed with stories of the elephant's divine origin. It is a colourful album painted during the reign of King Serfoji II, based on a treatise on elephants by Palakappiya Muni, with extracts from other Sanskrit works on the subject. Palakappiya was believed to have been a medical and veterinary scholar who lived with elephants for so long that he became an authority on the subject, thereby qualifying himself to become an author of the *Gaja Shastra.* The manuscript in the Sarasvati Mahal Library has descriptions in both Sanskrit and Marathi on each page.

The Maratha rulers had built a veterinary hospital in Parur for elephants and horses, and the *Ashva Shastra* and *Gaja Shastra* were followed for the diet and training of the animals. The Marathas used elephants for war, for heavy transportation, temple festivals and other activities. The elephant division of the army was the strongest and it is said that, in their time, only the Thanjavur kings could afford the number of elephants which they had.

Horses were used in the wars against Madurai and other states. The importance of the elephant in their reign can be gauged by the fact that 29 manuscripts on the

Plate 49(a): Ashva Shastra – Manmatha

Plate 49(b): Ashva Shastra – Rati

Plate 50: Ashva Shastra – the steeds of the Gods

Plate 51: Ashva Shastra – the perfect horse

subject are preserved in the Sarasvati Mahal Library. The Telugu version of the *Gaja Shastra* belongs to the rule of Perukondan Venkatapatiraju. Tuljaji I also researched the subject and several manuscripts of his reign are also available in the Library.

The diet prescribed for the elephant is very expensive and is recommended for all the twelve months in the year: coconut and palm leaves, branches of the banyan tree, sugarcane, bamboo, bamboo leaves. Milk and ghee were very important in the elephant's diet. However, the veterinary doctors of Parur say that there was much corruption among the officers and doctors and that the animals were not given their full share of food, nor were they treated well by the corrupt doctors and officials.

Shahji was the first to bring out illustrated manuscripts on the science of elephants. The present manuscript was recopied in Serfoji II's period with a Marathi translation.

Varana and the winged elephants (plate 52)

The *Gaja Shastra* contains a story of how the divine elephants lost their supernatural powers. The sage Varana became arrogant with desire. He wandered around Indraloka till he settled below a *vata* tree in the Himavat mountains. This became the Varanashram. He began a great *tapas* and came to be known as Deerghatapa.

Elephants were winged at that time. They flew up the tree and frolicked, disturbing Varana's *tapas*. Their behaviour angered the *muni* who cursed them with the loss of their wings, thus bringing them down to earth.

Brahma and the elephants (plate 53)

The unhappy elephants went sorrowfully to Brahma. Their pathetic story prompted Brahma to cure them

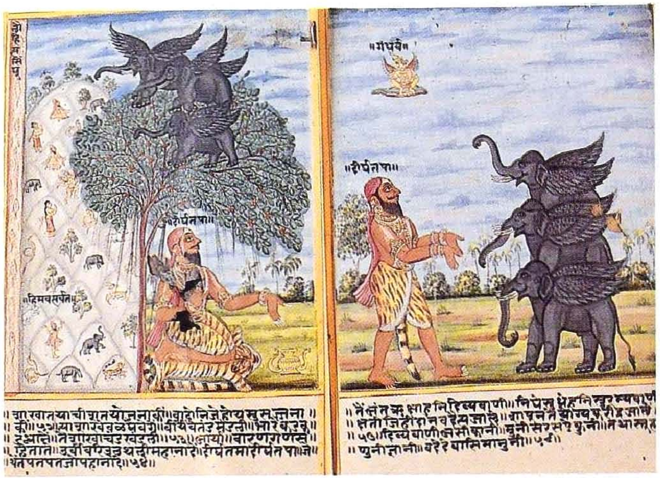


Plate 52: Gaja Shastra – Varana and the winged elephants

Plate 53: Gaja Shastra – Brahma and the elephants

of their ailments, the treatment of which is given in Ayurvedic texts.

The khedda (plate 54)

The *shastra* contains information on elephants, including the science of catching, taming and training them. On pages 162 and 163 is the description of the operation which has now come to be known as the *khedda*. The Shastra says that in a clearing surrounded by trees, a fort is created by (tame) elephants. Tame elephants chase the wild ones into the forests in groups of two, three and four. A hundred to a hundred and fifty people play instruments around the elephants, forming a tight circle, without leaving space for them to escape. This is called *Gajadaranaprakara*. After the elephant is tamed, it is tied to a wooden post. *(The alanabandhana mantra* is chanted to tame the elephant). The painting is illustrative of the above description. The circle, with the drum-beating loin-clothed men and the elephants, both wild and tamed, are a perfect picture of contemporary *khedda* operations. None of this appears to have changed with time.

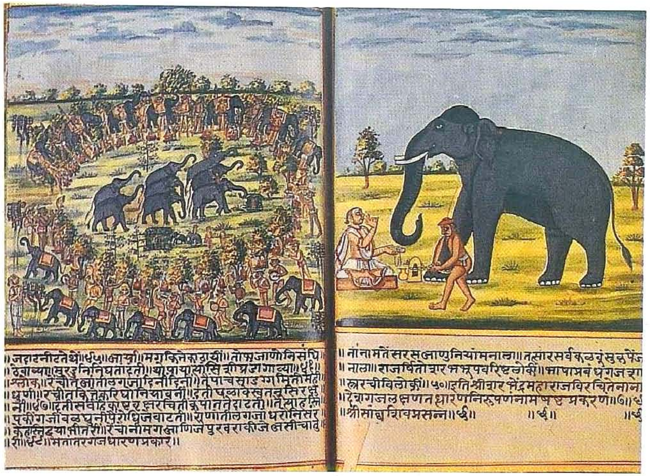


Plate 54: Gaja Shastra – The Khedda

Brahma and the cosmic egg (plate 55)

The *Gaja Shastra* has a beautiful set of paintings on the origin of the world from Brahma. On pages 32, 33, 34 and 35 is the story of Brahma who let his vira into the water. It became a huge golden egg, bright and lustrous.

Plate 55: Gaja Shastra – Brahma and the cosmic egg

Brahma and Aditi - Aditi gives the egg to the rishis (plate 56)

Brahma gave the egg to Aditi who kept it in her womb for 1000 years. One day, Surya lit up the womb and the egg broke. The broken egg spread everywhere and was seen by the *rishis* who gave it to Brahma and asked him to use it for the good of the people.

The paintings illustrating the story are very evocative, with the bright, golden egg in the water, Aditi

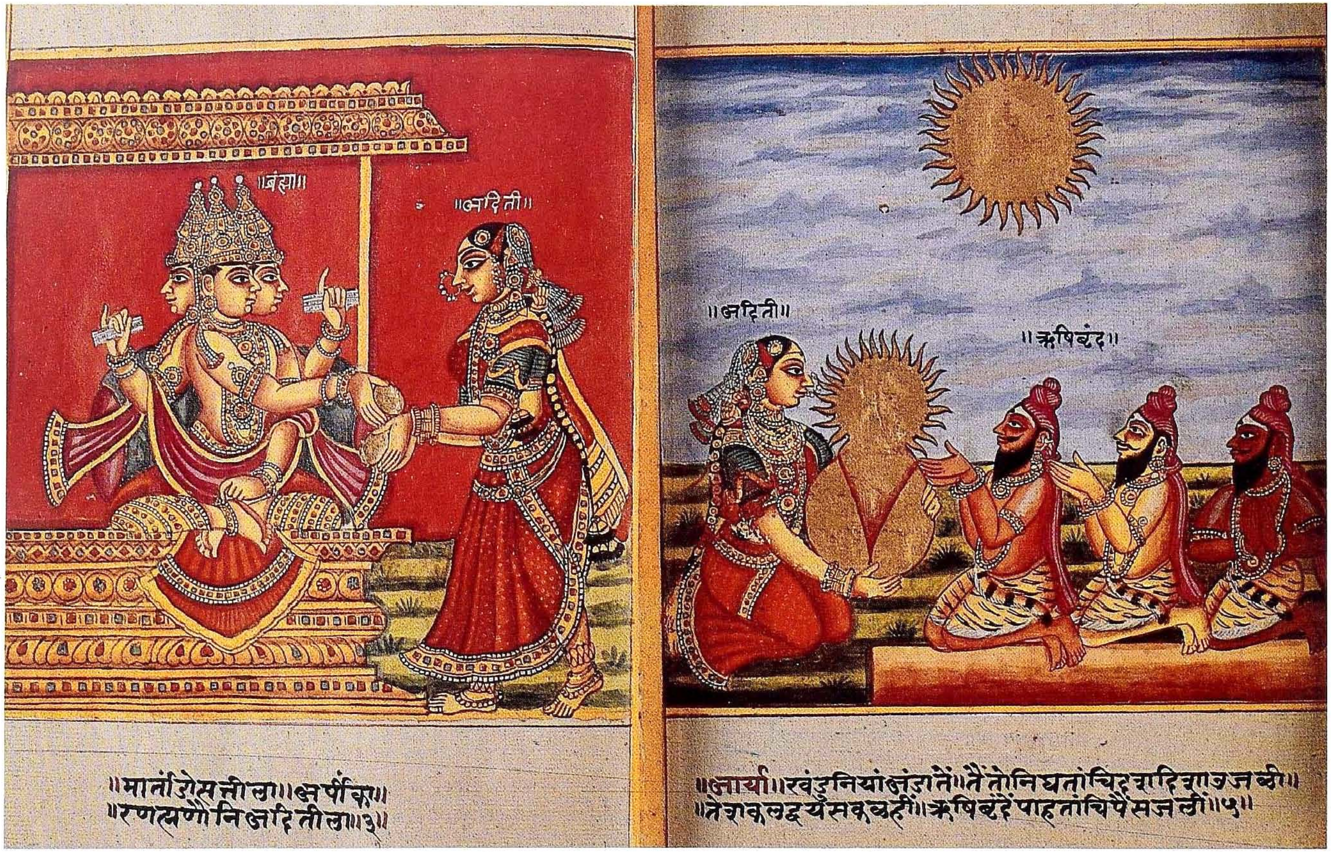


Plate 56: Gaja Shastra – Brahma and Aditi – Aditi gives the egg to the rishis

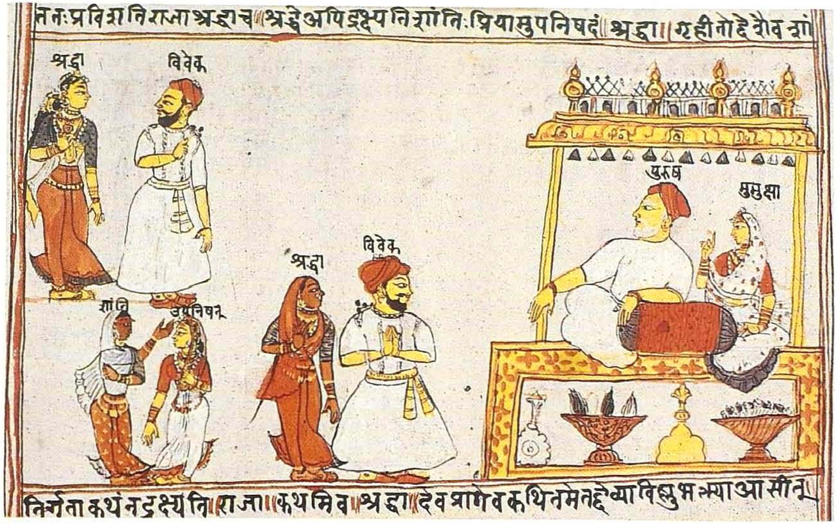


Plate 57: Prabodha Chandrodaya

Plate 58: Scroll horoscope

receiving it from Brahma and, finally, Aditi giving it to the *rishis.* The sun is reflected in the yoke of the egg. Aditi and Brahma are richly decorated in the style of the Thanjavur period.

Prabodha Chandrodaya (plate 57)

The *Prabodha Chandrodaya,* indicating both royalty and divinity, was a drama in Sanskrit describing the *Advaita* philosophy in simple language for the untutored. Authored by Chitsukha who lived in the thirteenth or fourteenth century in West Bengal, the beautifully illustrated manuscript makes a character of each *guna* in the *rajasik, tamasik* and *gnana* qualities. Although the *Prabodha Chandrodaya* is a philosophical drama, it is an excellent portrayal of the costumes, life style and the people of the Maratha period when it was written. It shows the various fashions of the clothes worn by men and women, from the head-covered Maratha women and the turbaned men to the white-sareed widow.

Scroll horoscope (plate 58)

Among the semi-religious works can be included the several almanacs. It is obvious that horoscope casting and astrology were as popular then as now. The ten metre-long scroll manuscript contains a horoscope with several predictions written in Marathi. It is brilliantly coloured and illustrated with a lot of painstaking numbering and the mystical lettering invariably associated with astrology.

Shaguna Shastra - the boat (plate 59)

The *Shaguna Shastra* is an illustrated work describing the meaning of various omens and dreams. Thus, whether it is an animal, god or even a secular object, it has a special significance or *shagunam.* A dream in which a boat (or ship) appears sailing in the sea, for example, is a promise of fortune in horses, elephants, great happiness and good health.

Shaguna Shastra - Hanuman (plate 60)

The sight of Hanuman foretells travel and wisdom, both qualities of the god.

Nayaka - Nayaki bhava (plates 61 to 64)

A manuscript containing a series of *nayaka-nayaki* paintings is a very interesting revelation of the life and times of the Maratha kings. The pictures tend to get mixed up, at times, with the story of Krishna, probably as the hero of the original *nayaka-nayaki* story itself. Scenes of court life contrast sharply with those of ordinary people; with scenes depicting the life inside the palace of gossiping diaphanously-dressed women contrasting sharply with the hard-working village women. It is not very certain what the manuscript was actually about, as most of the written matter is in tatters, and only the brightly coloured illustrations remain, illustrations of princesses and noble women, commoners and kings.

SECULAR PAINTINGS

Serfoji II was a great scholar who was interested in every aspect of life. He set up the Dhanvantri Mahal in Thanjavur where leading physicians carried out research in the Ayurveda, Allopathy, Siddha and Unani systems of medicine and left eighteen volumes of their research. Research was done on several ailments and diseases, and the Raja patronised the scholars and their associates with gifts of land and houses. The Dhanvantri Mahal also had a research wing on animal husbandry and tried to perfect the treatment of diseases of domestic and wild animals and birds. All these show the range of Serfoji's scholarship. Serfoji's doctors used the medicines on human beings and experimented on animals, as is done today.

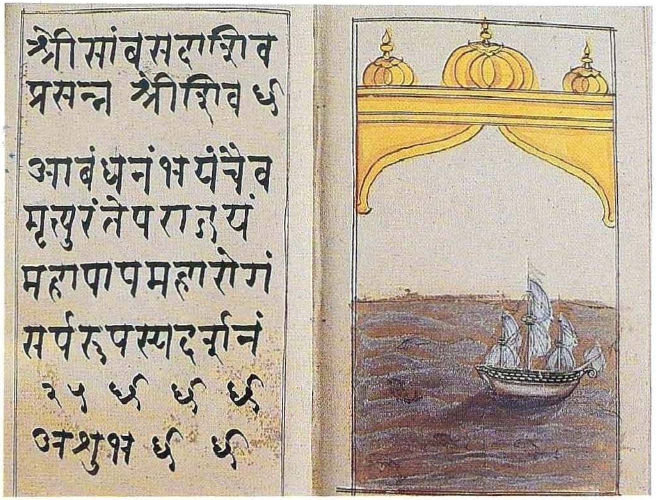


Plate 59: Shaguna Shastra – the boat

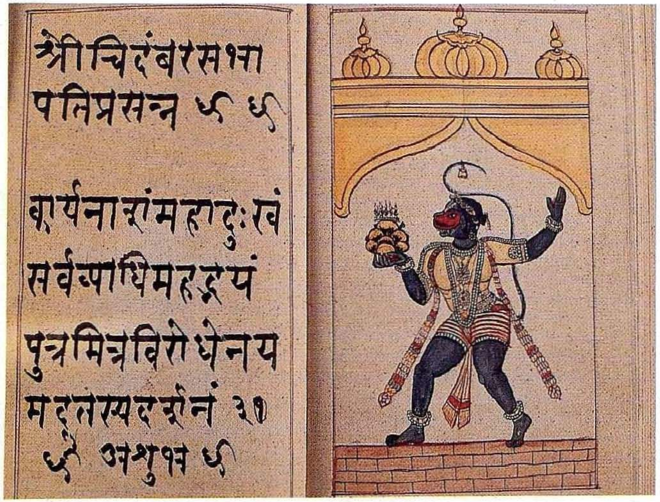


Plate 60: Shaguna Shastra – Hanuman

Plate 61: Nayaka – Nayaki bhava

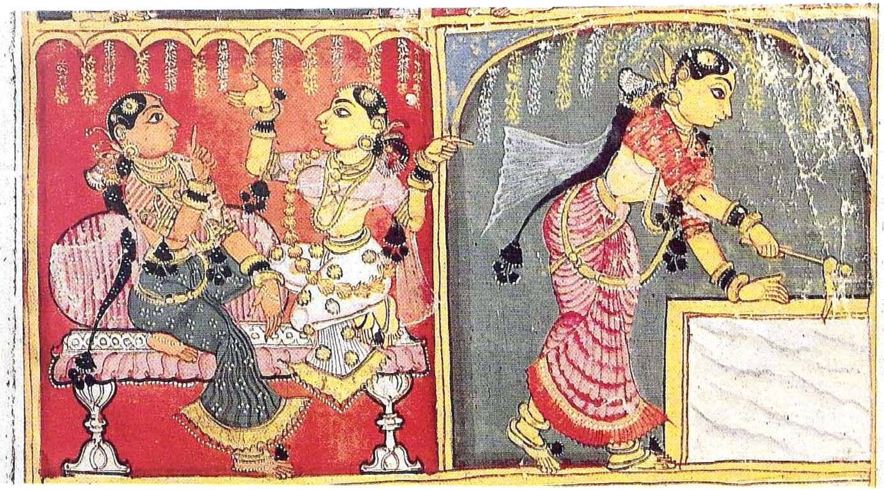


Plate 62: Nayaka – Nayaki bhava

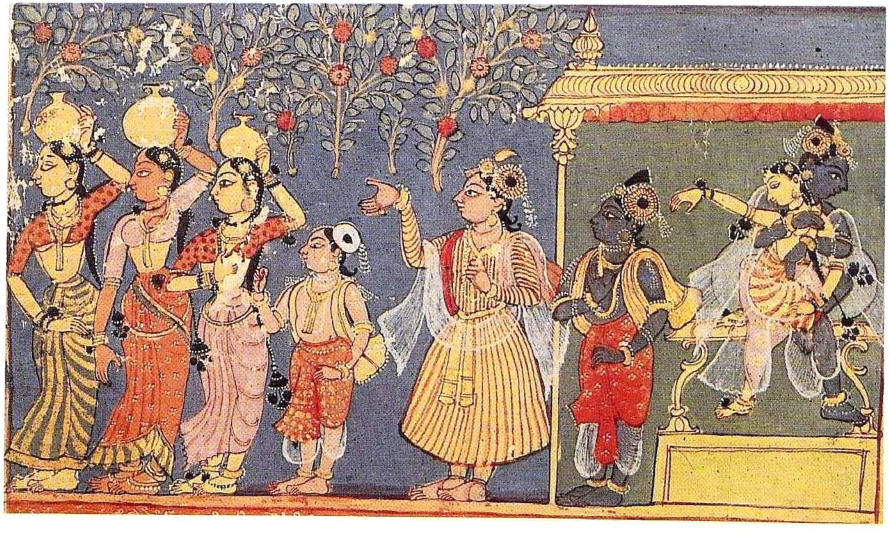


Plate 63: Nayaka – Nayaki bhava

Plate 64: Nayaka – Nayaki bhava

Falcon (plate 65)

A book on birds contains several exquisite water colour paintings. Among them, mention must be made of the falcon of Serfoji, presented by the Nawab of Udayagiri to the king. Serfoji had an Urdu book called *Baji Nama,* dealing with the treatment and diseases of falcons, translated into Marathi.

The Herbarium (plates 66 to 69)

This hand-painted manuscript is a veritable herbarium of local medicinal plants painted in natural colours. Among the exquisite paintings reproduced here are the *vazhaipoo* (the flower of the plantain), the *maramandarai* (bauhinia), *semparuthi* (hibiscus) and *suryakanthi* (sun flower). The paintings have retained their colour and lustre in spite of their great age, as the dulled paper indicates. They are no less in quality and value than those of great western botanical painters who have been eulogised time and again.

Ophthalmic chart (plate 70)

The Dhanvantri Mahal preserved detailed case sheets of the patients and their illnesses. One such example is a case sheet maintained in the *Vaidyashala* recording an eye disease and the prescription. As X-ray machines were not yet invented, paintings of the eye with the many defects were preserved with the name of the patient, the age, date of admission, details of prescription and the date of discharge, besides all the details of the case. It was signed by the medical officer and maintained in the *Vaidyashala.* This was revolutionary for the times and was a fore-runner of the contemporary case sheet.

Serfoji also prepared medical tablets such as *kangasundaram, chintamani, bhoopati, panchamrutha, parpadi,* etc., according to recipes developed in his medical unit.The name of each tablet was mentioned on one side with

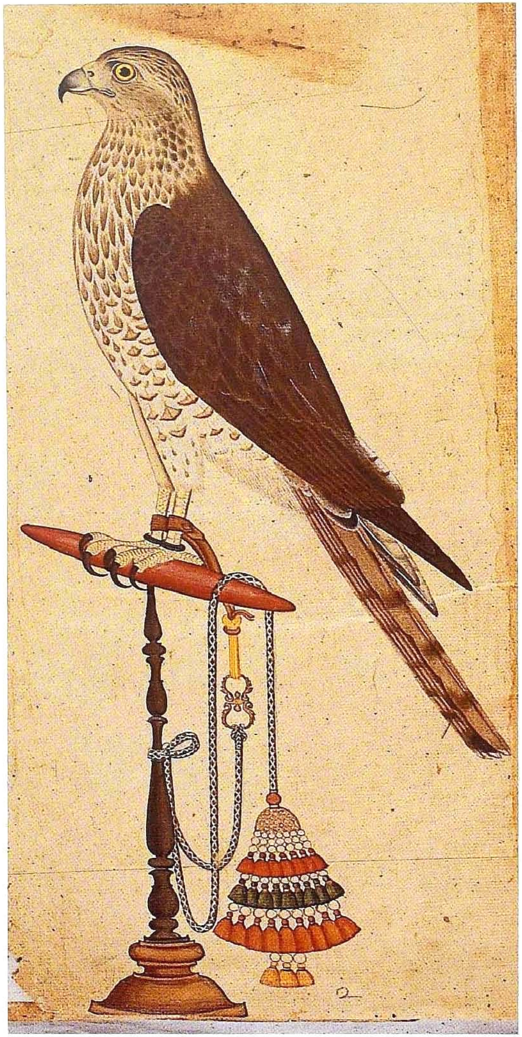


Plate 65: Falcon

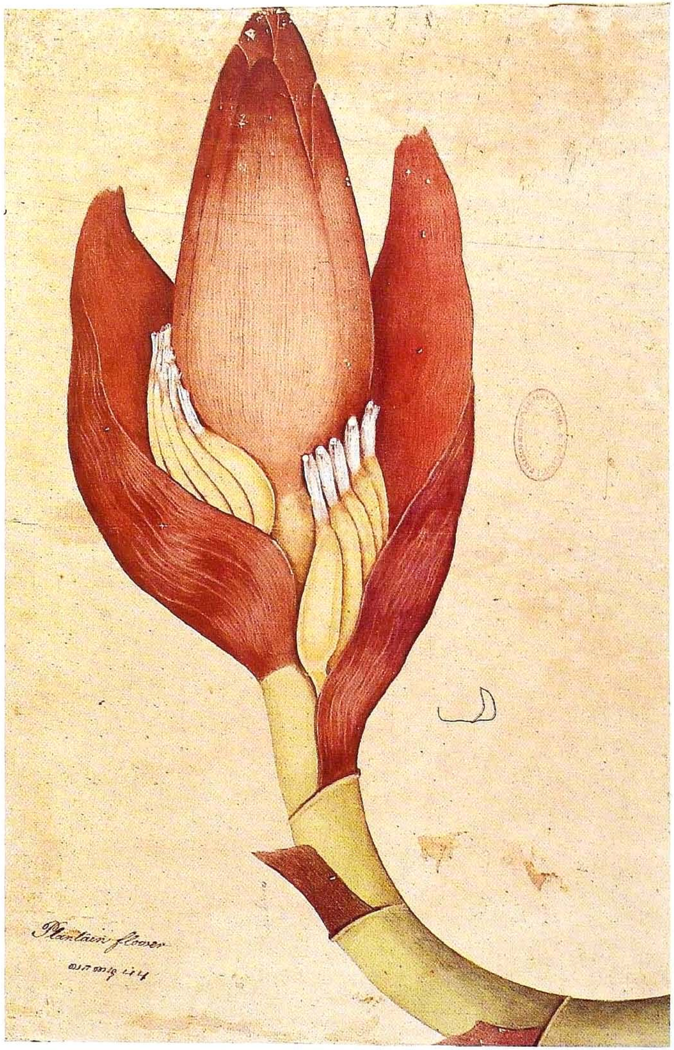


Plate 66: The Herbarium – Vazhaipoo (plantain flower)

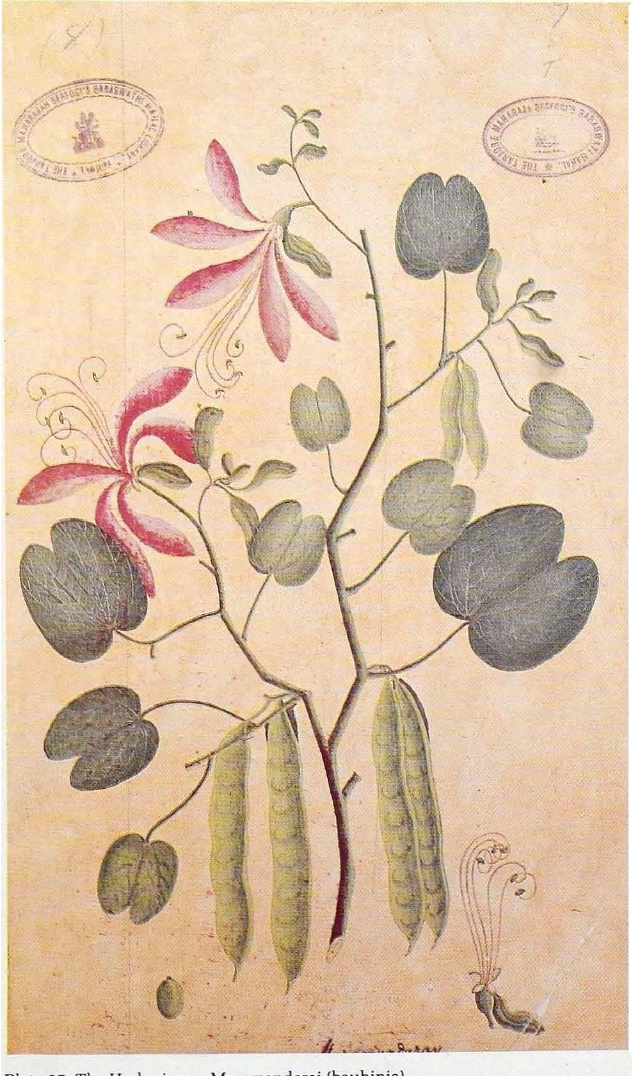
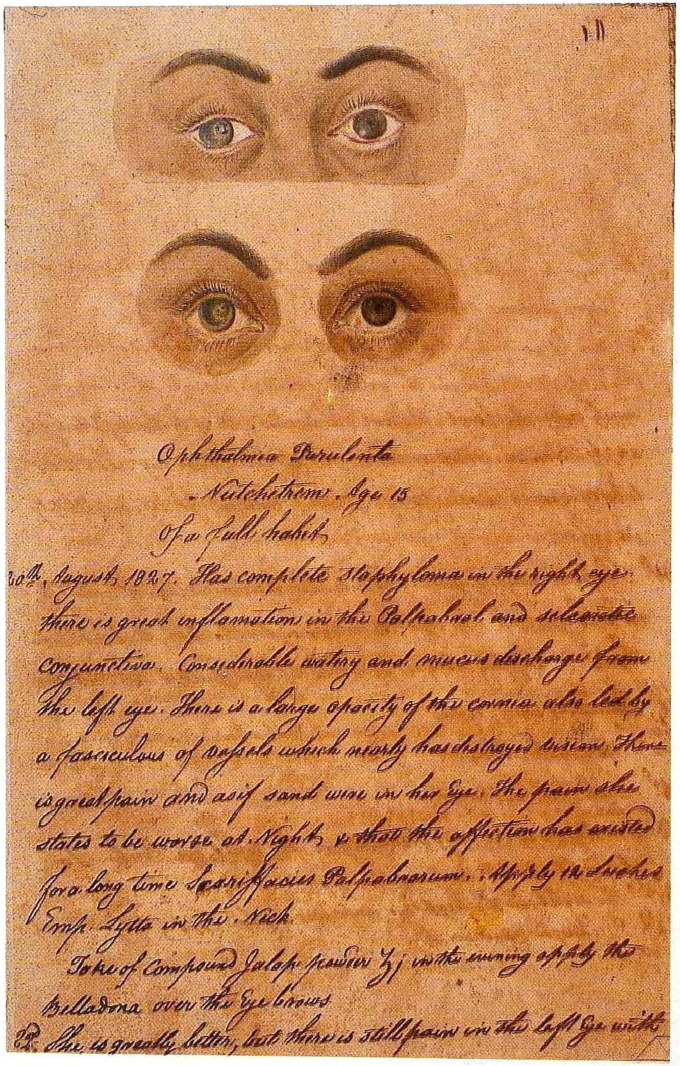


Plate 67: The Herbarium – Maramandarai (bauhinia)

Plate 68: The Herbarium – Semparuthi (hibiscus)

Plate 69: The Herbarium – Suryakanthi (sun flower)



Ophthalmia Purulenta
Natchetrum. Age 15
Of a full habit

20th August 1827. Has complete Staphyloma in the right eye there is great inflamation in the Palpebral and sclerotic conjunctiva. Considerable watery and mucus discharge from the left eye. There is a large opacity of the cornea also led by a fasciculous of vessels which nearly has destroyed vision. There is great pain and as if sand were in her eye. The pain she states to be worse at Night, & that the affection has existed for a long time. Scarification Palpebrarum. Apply 12 Leeches Emp. Lytta in the Neck.

Take of Compound Jalap powder ℥j in the evening apply the Belladona over the eye brows

22. She is greatly better, but there is still pain in the left eye with

Plate 70: Ophthalmic Chart

Plate 71: Military costume of the Maratha period

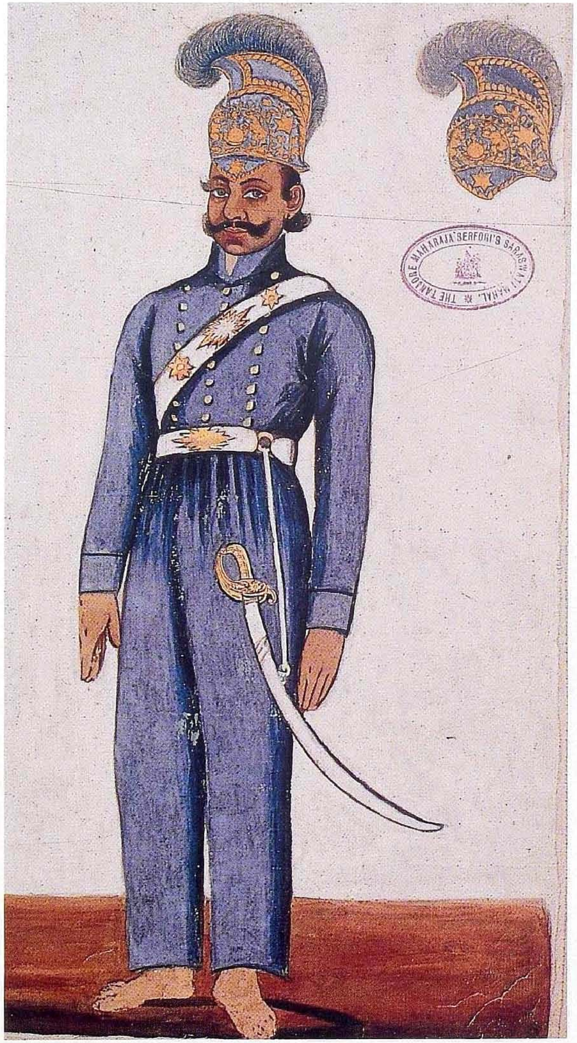


Plate 72: Military costume of the Maratha period

its use on the other. Interestingly, many of the tablets have not decomposed with time, *kattu* having been used as a powerful preservative.

Military costumes (plates 71 & 72)

Among the other secular paintings are those of the military costumes and attendants, with a variety of uniforms, regalia, decoration and head-dresses.

Butterfly (plate 73)

Similar paintings were done to catalogue contemporary knowledge of insects. In a painting of a butterfly reproduced here, the four wings are given four different designs and colours, indicating the artist's in-depth knowledge of the various species and their markings, which he combined into one for artistic purposes.

Palanquin (plate 74)

Other fashions of the period are also represented through paintings of objects of everyday use, such as the necessary palanquin. Such collections are many and form a story of their own, of the life and times of Serfoji II.

Costumes – Maharashtrian couple (plate 75)

Unfinished sketches of the various peoples and costumes of Serfoji II's time record the fashions of the different castes, besides the exquisite weave, design and texture of the materials.

Life of Mahmud Ghazni (plate 76)

A book on Mahmud of Ghazni's life, including his invasion of India, is a gruesome record of ingenious methods of torture, of paintings illustrating the Persian manuscript which describes Mahmud Ghazni's live

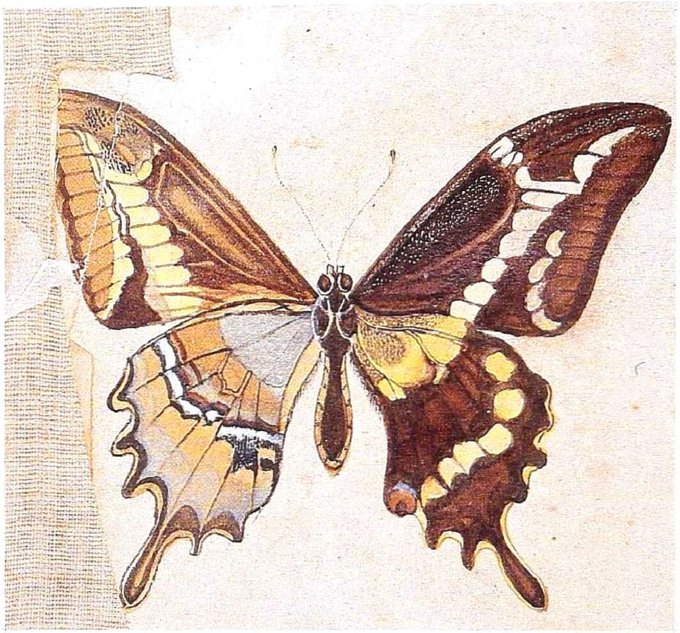


Plate 73: Composite butterfly

impalement of people with chopped-off heads and dismembered bodies of humans and animals, all surrounded by the blood that was shed by him. Some of the paintings are particularly grim, such as scenes of live impalement and of other tortures.

The bathing ghats of Benares (plate 78)

On a pilgrimage to Benares, Serfoji took along his English doctor, Dr. Sutton, and a painter Thomas, who was appointed on a monthly salary of 10 *puli varahans.*

The 64 bathing ghats were painted as viewed when travelling in a boat on the Ganga. The *ghats* are shown in eight successive leaves which, when put together, make up a 40 feet long painting of the bathing *ghats* on the banks of the river Ganga.

In commissioning the painting of the ghats, Serfoji II was following the tradition of his Western Indian relatives, many of whom had the bathing *ghats* of Benares immortalized in painting. This was but in keeping with the deep religiosity of the Marathas who upheld their religious and cultural traditions in a period of disturbance and change.

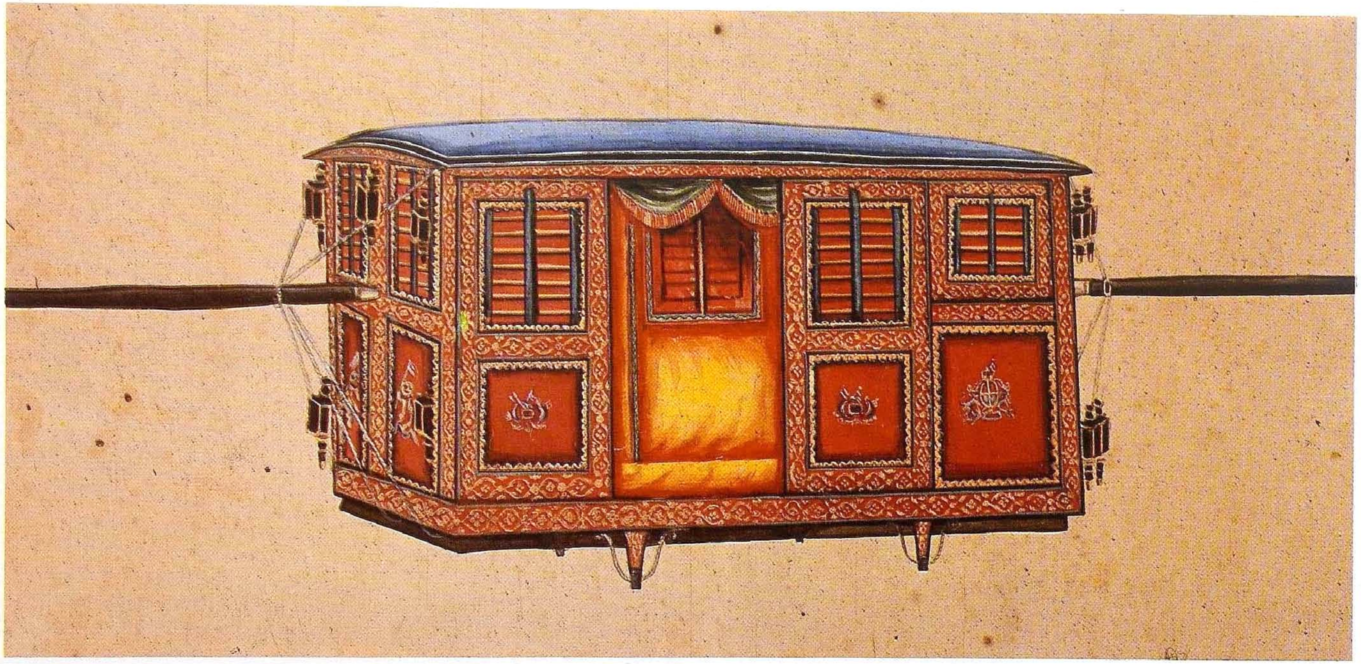


Plate 74: Palanquin

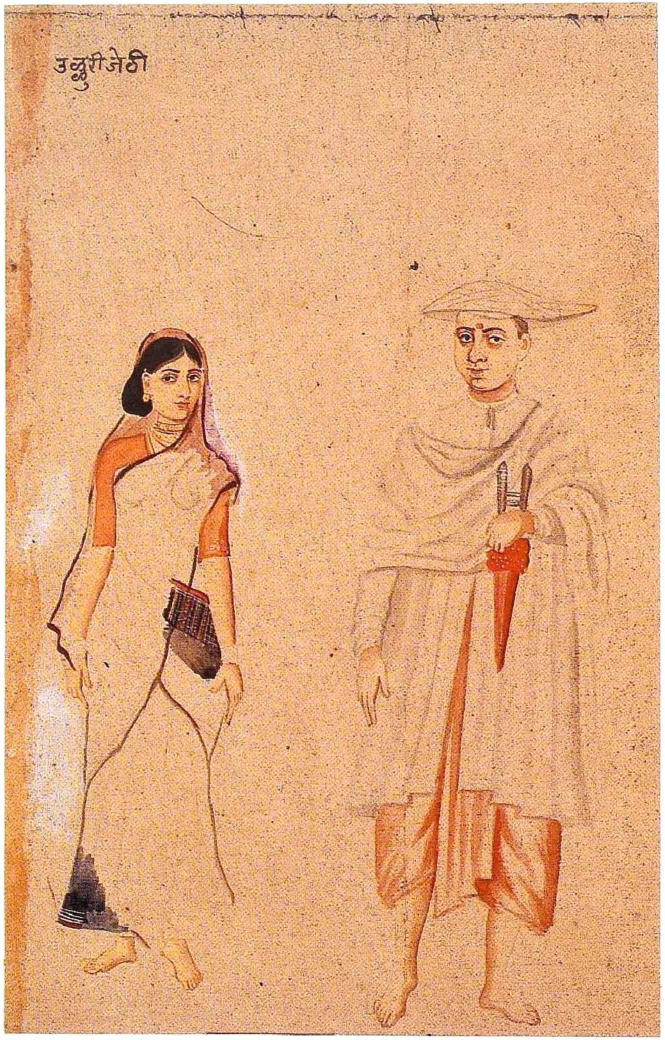


Plate 75: Maharashtrian couple

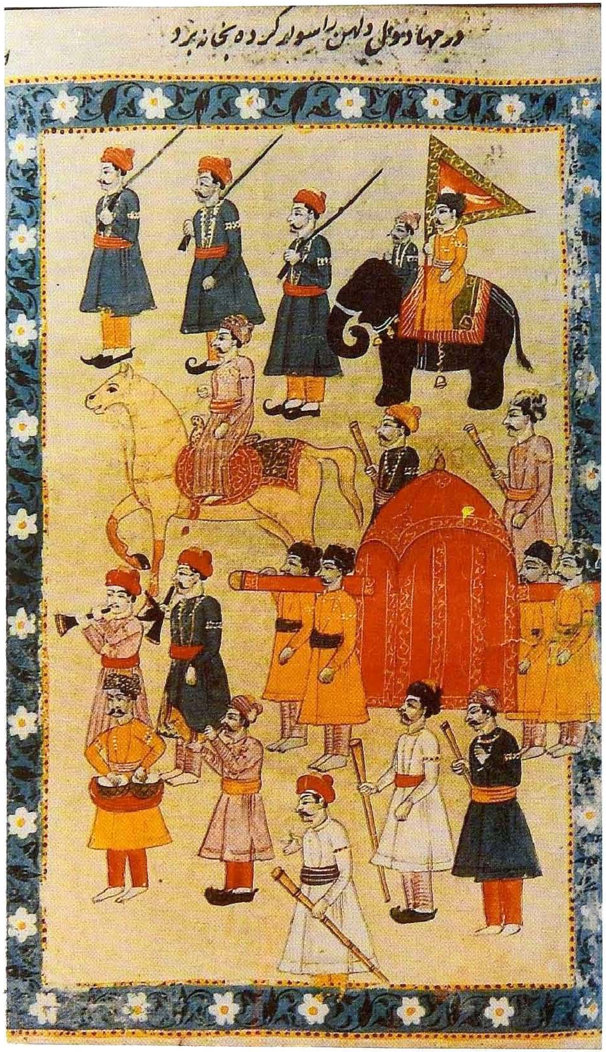


Plate 76: Life of Mahmud Ghazni

Conclusion

This account has barely introduced the collections of the Sarasvati Mahal Library, so vast are the subjects and the variety, the result of one man's vision and thirst for knowledge.

Serfoji II was a bibliophile in the true sense of the word. His thirst to acquire books was so great that he sent emissaries all over India in search of manuscripts. There are few, if any, works in Sanskrit which are not stored in the Sarasvati Mahal Library, besides the impressive collection of works in other languages. It would require an army of scholars to delve into the treasures locked within the Sarasvati Mahal and take stock of them.

Serfoji also understood the value and importance of illustrations in a text. In some cases, the illustration is not relevant to the text, as in the *Rig Veda* manuscript which is decorated with the *Thiruvilaiyadal* stories. Others, like the *Mahabharata,* illustrate the essence of each book, the causes and effects of every dramatic event.

The paintings vary in style and form. The manuscript paintings, the inheritors of an ancient legacy, are stylised, stiff and formatted. Their uniqueness lies in the miniaturisation, the wealth and detail of decoration and the religious empathy they create. Their beauty lies in all these and the very fact that they were painstakingly done to illustrate each heavy tome.

It is in the secular paintings, undoubtedly influenced by the West, that there is a germ of originality, creativity and a stylistic approach. Whether they were the paintings of the various botanical species, the falcons, butterflies or birds, the artists at Serfoji's court took great care to reproduce each detail. At the same time, Serfoji's own appreciation of nature and the world around him was transferred to these artists, who thus created beautiful specimens, heraldic in style, but rich and luscious to look at. Many of these artists were unknown, in traditional Indian style.

It was generally believed that the art of miniature painting was restricted to North India—to the Rajput, Mughal and Pahadi schools—and to the Muslim kingdoms of the Deccan. The south was believed to have specialised in massive murals and frescoes.

This book should put an end to such fallacies and prove to the world of art history that there was a South Indian school of miniature painting, influenced, perhaps, by other preceding and contemporary schools, but entirely South Indian in appearance and inspiration. In fact, this school has had an uninterrupted history till the present day, while many of the northern schools required a twentieth century revival. These miniatures continue in so many ways—from the elaborate Thanjavur gold leaf and glass paintings to the small paintings on paper framed and hung in the domestic *pooja*, to even "calendar" paintings.

This book should also serve to remind us of the great contribution of the Vijayanagara rulers to Indian culture. With missionary zeal, they achieved a renaissance of Indian culture which was to outlive their destruction. So powerful was this renaissance that it fanned out to the north, south, east and west. Thus, when the Marathas of Western India moved to the south, they were able to integrate very easily, for they shared a common culture, a tradition inherited from the great empire of Vijayanagara.

Finally, a study of the manuscripts teaches us that the narrow linguistic and sectarian divisions of the present were unknown in the past. The Maratha kings were equally at ease in Marathi, Sanskrit, Telugu and Tamil. Today's Tamil culture represents this fusion as much as it represents the great cultural traditions of Tamilnadu.

Thanjavur has been one of the pillars of Tamil culture, along with Kanchipuram and Madurai. It was a culture that was open to influences, and which transplanted just as easily, as is evidenced in South-East Asia. The Maratha period is a little-known but important part of this composite culture. The range of subjects in the manuscripts—from philosophy to the epics, from veterinary science to historical records—indicates the universality and thirst for knowledge of the savants and scholars of this land.

While the rulers were the patrons, the compilers and writers of the manuscripts were great scholars who flocked to Thanjavur, finding there an atmosphere congenial to their mind-set and intellectual abilities. This atmosphere of scholarship created a veritable cornucopia of literature. It was to the credit of these scholars that they realised the importance of the visual and set about illustrating their manuscripts, thereby establishing a school of miniature painting, as well as providing a glimpse into an earlier lost artistic tradition. Thus they left us a wealth of manuscript paintings which, fortunately, the far-seeing Raja Serfoji II collected and assembled in the Sarasvati Mahal Library at Thanjavur.

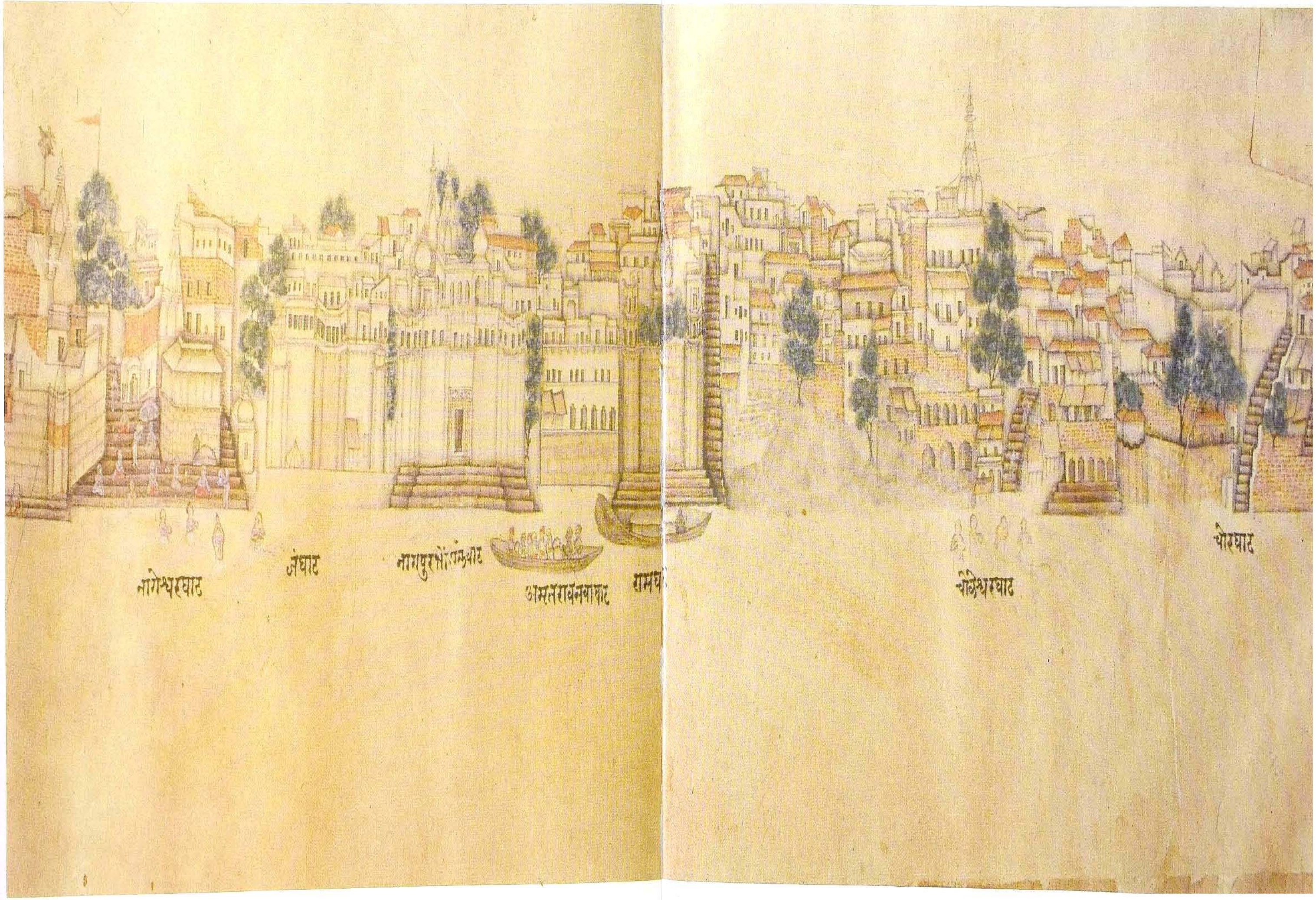


Plate 78: The bathing ghats of Benares

Glossary

Abhanga	A Marathi meter
Abhinaya	Facial expressions
Acharya	Teacher
Adavu	Basic unit of the classical dance style of Bharata Natyam
Adheenam	Religious order
Adiparva	One of the chapters of the Mahabharata
Advaita	Non-dualism, a system of philosophy propogated by Adi Shankara
Advaita Kirtana	A Tamil manuscript of the Maratha period
Advaita Pratipadana	One of the eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta* propounded by Mukundaraja
Advaitin	Follower of the *Advaita* school of philosophy
Agraharam	A village or street of houses inhabited by Brahmins
Aishikaparva	One of the chapters of the *Mahabharata*
Alanabandhana Mantra	A hymn to tame elephants
Amavasya	New moon
Amin	A court official (revenue collector)
Amrita kalasha	A sacred pot containing the immortal nectar
Angada Shishtayee	A Marathi manuscript by Krishnadasamudgala
Annapattinam	A literary work in *Devanagiri* script
Anushasanaparva	One of the chapters of the *Mahabharata*
Aranya Khanda	One of the sections (books) of the *Ramayana*
Ashanayika Vivah	A seventeenth century Marathi work by Alhana of Mahanubhava
Ashrama	The abode or retreat of *rishis*
Ashtamaskandha	A section of the *Bhagavata* written by Ambaji Pandita and Vasudeva Pandita
Ashva Shastra	An illustrated Sanskirt manuscript dealing with horses
Atmarama Grantha	A collection of Sant Ramdas' teachings in Marathi
Atmavidya Vilasa Teeka	A work by Rama Pandita of Serfoji I's period
Avatara	Incarnation
Ayodhya Khanda	One of the sections (books) of the *Ramayana*

Baji Nama	An Urdu book translated into Marathi, dealing with the diseases and treatment of falcons
Bala Khanda	One of the sections (books) of the *Ramayana*
Baroque	An ornate style of art and architecture with excessive decoration
Bhagavat Gita	The song celestial, imparted by Lord Krishna to Arjuna at the commencement of the Kurukshetra war
Bhagavata	Pertaining to Lord Vishnu
Bhagavata Mela	An ancient drama form of Tamilnadu
Bhagavata Purana	A Sanskrit work
Bhajana Sampradaya	The tradition of devotional music
Bhamati	The oldest paper manuscript in the Sarasvati Mahal Library, a commentary on Adi Shankara's *bhashya* by Vachaspati
Bhandira Bhasha	A rare Indian dialect
Bhanga	A bend or curve (a posture generally adopted in Indian dance forms)
Bharata Natyam	The dance of Bharata, the classical dance of South India
Bhashya	Commentary
Bhava Purushottama	An allegorical play by Ratnakheta Srinivasa Dikshita
Bhavartha Ramayana	A Marathi version of the Ramayana, written by Eknath Maharaj
Bhedakhandana	One of the eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta,* propounded by Mukundaraja
Bhishmaparva	One of the chapters of the *Mahabharata*
Bhoopathi	A herbal tablet prepared by Serfoji II, according to the recipes developed in his medical unit
Bommalatam	Pupperty, generally with marionettes
Bosalavamsavalli	Sanskrit manuscript written by Venkata Kavi
Chakra	Wheel
Chandana Maliyagiri Katha	A Jain manuscript of 1773 A.D. from Karanja in Maharashtra
Chandrasekhara Vilasa	A literary work by Shahji
Chandrasekhara Vilasam Kuravanji	A dance drama written by Shahji
Chatram	An establishment providing free boarding and lodging for travellers and pilgrims
Chauri	Fan or whisk
Chintamani	A herbal tablet prepared by Serfoji II according to the recipes developed in his medical unit
Chiranjeevi	Immortal, long-lived
Chitra Ramayana	Illustrated *Ramayana*
Chitrakara	Artist
Chitramaya pothi	Illustrated book
Chitrashala	Art gallery
Chitravidyopadhyaya	Great artist
Chitronmilan	Ritual by which the deity in a painting "acquires life"
Choultry	An establishment providing free boarding and lodging for travellers and pilgrims.
Dabir	A revenue area
Dabir Pandita	Revenue Collector
Dalavai	A combined post of *Senapati* (Chief of the army), *Peshwa* (Prime minister) and *Dharmadhikari* (Officer in charge of religious functions)
Damayanthi Swayamvara	A Marathi literary work by Ragunatha Pandita
Dasa bhodha	An illustrated manuscript in miniature
Dashakumaracharita	A famous Sanskrit literary work written by Dandin
Dasi attam	Dance of the slave girl, a traditional term for *Bharata Natyam*
Deepam	Light, lamp
Desi	Non-classical
Devadasi	Slave of the Lord, a term used for dancing girls
Devanagiri	The script in which the Sanskrit languages are written. It is derived from Brahmi, a script of ancient India.

Devasreya Mandapam	A hall of rest for the deity in a temple
Devasthanam	Place of the deity, temple property
Devendra Kuravanji	A dance drama
Dhanvantri Vilasa	A literary work by Tukoji
Dharmadhikari	Officer in charge of religious functions
Divodasa Charita	A literary work by Rama Pandita during the period of Serfoji I
Drishyakavya	Visual poetry
Dubash	Revenue Collector
Durbar	King's court, hall of public audience
Durga Shabda Stuti	One of the smallest paper manuscripts in the Sarasvati Mahal library
Dvipada Ramayana	A Telugu work by Ekoji I
Gadaparva	One of the chapters of the *Mahabharata*
Gaddi	Throne, royal seat
Gaja Shastra	An illustrated Sanskrit treatise on elephants, written during the period of Serfoji II
Gajadaranaprakara	To surround the elephants by hundreds of people playing musical instruments, forming a tight circle, without leaving space for them to escape
Gajendramoksha	A story describing the liberation of Gajendra (the elephant) from the clutches of the wicked crocodile by Lord Vishnu
Ganjifa	Indian card game
Garba griha	*Sanctum sanctorum* of temple, in which the main deity is consecrated
Gesso	The art of decorating painting with gold foil, decorative system popular in Thanjavur painting
Geyanataka	Opera
Ghat	A place alongside a river used for bathing
Gitopadesham	Krishna's advice to Arjuna, recorded in the *Bhagavat Gita*
Gnana	Knowledge, wisdom
Gnaneshwari	A thirteenth century Marathi philosophical treatise
Gopi	Yellow powder, colouring used in painting
Gopuram	Entrance gateway to temple
Graha	Planet; house
Guna	Quality
Gurukula	Ancient residential school, where the students lived with their teachers, served them and learned the *shastras*
Hakim	Native doctor
Hari Bhakti	Poetry written by Gangadhara during the period of Ekoji II
Harihara Vilasa	A drama written by Shahji
Harikatha	Story of the Lord, narrated in prose and music
Harivamsa	A literary work by Rama Pandita during the period of Serfoji I
Harshacharita	An ancient Sanskrit literary work by Bana
Huseni	A *raga* or melody
Indraloka	Abode of Lord Indra
Ishvaratanutraya	One of the eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta* propounded by Mukundaraja
Jaghir	Free-hold land
Jaghirdar	Landlord
Jambavati Parinaya	A play by Krishnadevaraya, the Vijayanagar emperor
Jataka	Buddhist parables in the Pali language
Jati	Rhythmic syllable
Jeevaparamatmayaikya	One of the eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta*, propounded by Mukundaraja
Jivakachintamani	A Tamil epic by Thiruthakka Thevar (a Jain)
Kalakshepa	Religious discourse
Kalalaya Manmiya	A literary work by Rama Pandita, written during the period of Serfoji I
Kalam	Pen
Kalamkari	The art of painting with a *kalam* or wooden pen, using vegetable and mineral colours.
Kalanirnaya	A literary work by Hemadri
Kalasam	Water pot; a round pinnacle on the top of a temple

Kama Tantra Sara	Poetry written by Gangadhara during the period of Ekoji II
Kamasutra	A Sanskrit treatise on the art of love by Vatsayana
Kangasundaram	A herbal tablet prepared by Serfoji II on the basis of the recipes developed in his medical unit
Karana	Poses of dance
Karanadehasakshi	One of the eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta* propounded by Mukundaraja
Karnakalanidhi	A Telugu literary work by Shivarama Kavi
Karnaparva	One of the chapters of the *Mahabharata*
Kathasaritsagara	"Ocean of Stories", a Sanskrit literary work
Kattu	A powerful preservative for herbal medicines
Kavacha	Metal covering
Kavalkarar	Village policemen
Kavutvam	Poems composed for dances in honour of a deity
Kavya	Epic
Khanda	A stage (used in the sense of section or book, to separate the different sections of the *Ramayana*)
Khanubhavadyardakarna	One of the eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta* propounded by Mukundaraja
Khedda	The system of catching, taming and training elephants
Khilledar	The officer in charge of a fort
Kirtan	Song of praise to a deity; sacred hymn
Kolu	Arrangement of dolls on steps, as done during the *Navaratri* festival
Koothu	Drama
Krishna Manjari	A Marathi literary work by Pratapasimha
Krishnacharita	A literary work by Agastya Pandita
Kshetramahatmya	Sacred stories/legends associated with religious shrines
Kshetriya padamudu	Collection of Kshetrayya's *padas*
Kudiyaram	The labourer's share of the produce of land or salt-pans
Kumarasambhava	A Sanskrit drama written by Kalidasa
Kumarasambhava Champu	A literary work by Serfoji II
Kuravanji	Dance drama about gypsies
Kusalava Vijaya Nataka	A literary work by Venkata Krishna Dikshitar
Lakshmi Kalyana	A drama written by Shahji
Lavani	A Marathi style of folk music and dance
Leela	Play or games, generally of the Lord
Leelacharita	A Marathi literary work
Lilavati Kalyana	A *yakshagana* composed by Giriraja Kavi
Maghamula	A Marathi folk song and dance sequence
Maha-Advaita-pratipadana	One of the eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta*, propounded by Mukundaraja
Mahabharata	One of the two great Sanskrit epics
Mahapraschaparva	One of the chapters of the *Mahabharata*
Malavikagnimitra	A Sanskrit play by Kalidasa
Mallari Manmiya	Poetry written by Gangadhara during the period of Ekoji II
Mandapa	An open-pillared hall, generally a part of a temple complex
Mangalya	The married state for women
Manipravala	A script
Manora	A fort-like tower
Mantri	Minister
Manushya	One of the *margas* of *Vedanta* described in *Siddhasanketa*
Maramandarai	*Bauhinia*, a flower
Marga	Way
Markandeya Nataka	A drama written by Shahji
Markata	One of the *margas* of *Vedanta* described in *Siddhasanketa*
Masi	Writing ink, available in red, black, gold and silver colours
Matankaramshani-roopana	One of the *margas* of *Vedanta* described in *Siddhasanketa*
Math	A college or school for young Brahmins pursuing theological studies

Maya Anivarchaneeya	One of the eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta* propounded by Mukundaraja
Mela	A fair
Mimamsa	A school of philosophy of ancient India
Modi	A script used in the past to write Marathi
Mohini Vilasa Kuravanji	A dance drama written both in Tamil and Sanskrit by Saptarishi
Mridangam	A double-sided percussion instrument
Mrityunjaya Chiranjeevi Natakam	A Marathi composition by Shahji
Mudra	Hand pose, used in classical Indian dances
Mudrarakshaschya	A Marathi literary work by Serfoji II
Mukundan Katha	A Marathi work by Rama Pandita written during the period of Serfoji I
Muni	Sage
Mushika	Mouse
Nadu	An administrative region
Narasimhapurana	A Marathi work by the poet Gangadhara of the period of Ekoji II
Nataka	Drama
Natesa Vijayam	A literary work by Venkata Krishna Dikshita of the period of Shahji
Nattuvanaar	Person playing the tiny cymbals to keep beat for dance; generally refers to the dance master
Natya shastra	Canon of dance
Navaratri	Festival celebrated for nine consecutive days and nights in honour of Devi
Nawab	Governor of a region in the old Moghul empire of India
Nayaka-Nayaki	Hero/heroine
Neelotpala	A fruit held by Devi
Nirupana	The textual matter of *Harikatha*
Nritta	Pure dance, dominated by footwork
Ovi	A Marathi meter composed by Sant Ramdas
Pada	Songs on romantic love
Paddhathi	A composition in music
Padya Sahitya	A form of drama initiated by Shahji
Pallaki Seva Prabandha	Music and dance compositions enacted during temple processions
Panchabhasha Kuravanji	A story in five languages – Telugu, Tamil, Marathi, Kannada and Sanskrit – written by Shahji
Panchamrutha	One of the medicines prepared by Serfoji II; a sweet preparation containing five sacred ingredients and used in temple ritual.
Panchangam	Almanac
Panchapakshi Shastra	A work dealing with the astrological predictions of birds
Panchapralaya	One of the eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta* propounded by Mukundaraja
Pandita	Scholar
Pandita Parishad	Assembly of scholars
Panna	Palm leaves used as writing material
Parijata Nataka	A Marathi work by Pratapasimha
Parishad	Assembly meeting, council
Parisheshakhanda	A literary work by Hemadri
Parpadi	A medical tablet prepared by Serfoji II according to recipes developed in his medical unit
Parva Mahabharata	Written in Marathi by Madhavaswami of Thiruvazhandur
Pata	Small sheet of paper containing a painting
Pathashala	School
Pativrata Dharma	A Marathi literary work by Raghunatha Pandita
Pattabhishekham	Coronation
Patra	Leaf
Peetham	Seat of a religious order
Peshwa	Prime minister of the Marathas
Phalavati	A glossary of the *Poorva Mimamsa Sutra* of sage Jaimini
Pie	An unit of currency
Pinnal kolattam	A folk dance performed by girls with sticks in their hands and holding cloth streamers which are cleverly braided in the course of the dance

Pipeelika	One of the *margas* of *Vedanta*, described in *Siddhasanketa*
Pithori vrata pata	A *pata* painting narrating the story of the *pithori amavasya* vow (*vrata*)
Pooja	Worship
Poorva Mimamsa Sutra	A philosophic work formalized by sage Jaimini
Potramarai	Golden lotus
Poykaal kudaria	"False-legged horse", a folk dance form of Tamilnadu, wherein the artist dances on a stilt-footed dummy horse
Prabandha	Poetic composition
Prabodha Chandrodayam	A Sanskrit drama written by Chitsukha
Pradhan	Chief or head of a village or assembly
Prakara	Enclosure
Prakritipurusha	One of eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta* expounded by Mukundaraja
Prapanchairasana	One of the *margas* of *Vedanta* described in *Siddhasanketa*
Prarabdhabhogasangrahani	One of the *margas* of *Vedanta* described in *Siddhasanketa*
Puranas	Ancient Sanskrit legends of gods, heroes and holy people
Radha Vijayam	A Hindi composition by Shahji
Raga	A melody of classical Indian music consisting of a specific combination of notes
Ragamalikai	A necklace of melodies or several melodies strung together in a single song
Raghuvamsa	A Sanskrit drama written by Kalidasa
Raja Gopala Vilasa	A literary work by Shyamaraja written during the period of Serfoji I
Rajasik	One of the three *gunas* (qualities), denoting dynamism
Rajasuya Yagam	Coronation ceremony
Rakshasa	Ancient tribe, likened to demons
Ramamritha Taranga	A literary work by Rama Pandita written during the period of Serfoji I
Ramapattabhishekham	The coronation of Rama
Ramayana	A Sanskrit epic by Valmiki. Centuries later, other authors rewrote the *Ramayana* in regional languages
Rashi	Zodiac sign
Ratimanmatha	A literary work by Jagannatha, belonging to the period of Serfoji I
Rig Veda	The first of the four divinely-revealed books of Hinduism
Rishi	Sage
Rukmini Swayamvara	The story of the marriage of Krishna and Rukmini
Sabhaparva	One of the chapters of the *Mahabharata*
Sachchidanandavivarana	One of the eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta* propounded by Mukundaraja
Sadguruparamparani	One of the eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta* propounded by Mukundaraja
Sadr Madi	A four-storyed structure built by Serfoji II in 1800 in the Thanjavur palace
Sadr nautch	The term used for *dasi attam* in the Maratha court
Sahendra Vilasa Kavya	A historical work by Aiyyarval of Thiruvisainallur
Sahitya Ratnakara	A Sanskrit work by Yajnarayana
Salaka	A stylus made of metal, with a pointed end for writing and a knife on the other end for cutting the leaves
Samadhana	Pacify
Sangam	Conference or coming together; also refers to the early school of Tamil Literature
Sangeeta Saramrita	A musical work by Tukkoji
Saptamaskanda	A Marathi manuscript, part of the *Bhagavata,* written by Gangadhara, during the period of Shahji
Sarabhara Vilasa	A literary work by Jagannatha belonging to the period of Serfoji I
Sarasvati Bhandar	A palace library started by Raghunatha Nayak in Thanjavur in the 17th century, which later became the Sarasvati Mahal Library

Sati	The practice of self-immolation by a widow on her husband's funeral pyre
Satidana	A *Yakshagana* composed by Shahji I
Seeriyala Charita	A literary work by Renukadasa during the period of Serfoji I
Semparuthi	Hibiscus, a flower
Senapati	Chief of the army
Shabdaratna Samanvaya	A literary work by Shahji
Shabdaratna Sangraha	A literary work by Shahji
Shaguna Shastra	An illustrated work describing the meaning of various omens and dreams
Shahajiraja Kuravanji	A Tamil dance drama composed by Saptarishi
Shakuntala	A literary work by Ekoji II
Shankara-Kali Natana Samvadham	A dance drama written by Shahji
Shantiparva	One of the chapters of the *Mahabharata*
Shastra	Ancient canon on either religious practice, science, art or architecture
Shivabhakta	Devotee of Shiva
Shivabharata	A chronicle of Shivaji and his achievements
Shivakamasundari Parinaya	A *Yakshagana* composed by Tukkoji
Shri Bhagavat Uttaradha	A literary work based on the *Bhagavata*
Shri Ramachandrodaya Kavya	A literary work by Venkatakrishna
Shri Shiva Prapancha	A Marathi work on Lord Shiva
Shringara	Romantic
Shringara Manjari Shahajiyam	A drama written by Periyappa Kavi
Shringaramanjari	A literary work by Shahji
Siddhasanketa	A Marathi work ascribed to Mrityunjaya, describing several *margas* of *Vedanta*
Smritasangraha	A literary work by Serfoji II
Smritasarasamuchya	A literary work by Serfoji II
Sollukattu	Rythmic syllable
Sookshmadehasakshi	One of the eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta* propounded by Mukundaraja
Sriranga Mahatmya	Poetry written by Gangadhara during the period of Ekoji II
Sthooladehasakshi	One of the eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta* propounded by Mukundaraja
Sthooladehavampranava	One of the eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta* propounded by Mukundaraja
Streeparva	One of the chapters of the *Mahabharata*
Subah	An administrative division of a country
Subedar	Administrator
Suramu	A *yakshagana* composed by Shahji I
Suryakanthi	Sunflower
Suta Samhita	A poetic work by Gangadhara
Svara	Musical note
Svarajati	A musical composition, used in dance, consisting of alternating *svaras* (musical notes) and *jatis* (rhythmic syllables)
Svaroopasamavesha	One of the eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta* propounded by Mukundaraja
Tada patra	Palm leaves used as writing material
Tala	Beat
Tala patra	Palm leaves used as writing material
Talamalikai	A necklace of beats or sevearl beats strung together in a single song
Tamasik	One of three *gunas* or qualities, denoting slothful
Tandava	Dance, generally of Shiva
Tanpadadehalingadehe	One of the eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta* propounded by Mukundaraja
Tapas	Penance
Tarif-e-Husain Shahi	An illustrated manuscript commissioned by Sultan Hussain Nizam Shah of Ahmednagar
Tasveer	Portrait
Tattrodyotavivarana	A literary work by Jayatirtha written in the 16th century
Tattva Chintamanivyakhya	A literary work on logic by Dharma Vijayadhvarin
Tattvasrushtikathana	One of the eighteen *margas* of *Vedanta* propounded by Mukundaraja

Tattvopadesha	Lessons on the Truth
Thambiran	Shaivite ascetic
Thanjaivellai Pillaiyar	The first *kuravanji* dance drama
Therukoothu	Street theatre of Tamilnadu
Thirthasthalli Yathrecha Lavanya	A Marathi *Lavani* written by Ulke Govindachari
Thiruvaymozhi Vachakamalai	A Tamil literary work by Nammalvar written in *Manipravala*
Thiruvilaiyadal	Stories of the sacred *leelas* of Lord Shiva
Tholu bommalatam	Shadow puppetry of Tamilnadu in which leather *(tholu)* puppets are used
Tholu bommulu	Shadow puppetry of Andhra Pradesh, in which leather *(tholu)* puppets are used
Tyagarajamanmiya	A literary work by Rama Pandita during the period of Serfoji I
Tyagaraya vilasa	A drama by Shahji
Tyageshaparinaya	A literary work by Ekoji II
Tyagesha kuravanji	A dance drama
Ubhayasamadhiguru-charanaravinda Bhakti-Poojana	One of the *margas* of *Vedanta* described in the *Siddhasanketa*
Uma Samhita	A Marathi work by Pratapasimha
Upanayana	The sacred thread ceremony conducted for Brahmin boys
Uttrachampu	A literary work by Venkata Krishna Dikshita
Uttararamacharita	A commentary by Ghanashyama, during the period of Ekoji II
Vahana	Vehicle
Vaidyashala	Hospital, dispensary
Vamana Purana	One of the eighteen *Puranas*
Varttikabharana	An outstanding Sanskrit work by Venkatamakin on *Mimamsa* philosophy
Vata	*Ficus krishnae*, a tree
Vazhaipoo	The flower of the plaintain
Veda Pathashala	School for Vedic studies
Vedanta	The philosophy elucidated in the Upanishads
Vedantasurya	A Marathi work on *Advaita* by Shridharaswami
Vedas	Ancient sacred books of Hinduism, believed to have been divinely revealed
Viddhasalabhajnika Vakhya	A literary work by Tukkoji's two wives Kamala and Sundari
Vidhwan	A great musician or musical composer
Vidyaparinaya	A literary work by Vedakavi
Vihangama	One of the *margas* of *Vedanta* described in the *Siddhasanketa*
Vimana	A spiral tower on top of the *sanctum sanctorum*
Vinaya Manmiya	A literary work by Rama Pandita during the period of Serfoji I
Virataparva	One of the chapters of the *Mahabharata*
Vishnudharmottara	A comprehensive treatise on painting
Vishokaparva	One of the chapters of the *Mahabharata*
Vivarana Darpana	An outstanding Sanskrit literary work by Rangaraja, the father of the famous Appayya Dikshitar
Vivekasindhu	A Vedantic treatise in Marathi by Mukundaraja
Yajna	Sacrifice; a ritual performed before the sacred fire
Yakshagana	A folk dance–drama form of Karnataka
Yogi	A contemplative sage or ascetic (male)
Yogini	A contemplative sage or ascetic (female)

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